









## FRIAR'S LANTERN



# FRIAR'S LANTERN

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"And he, by friar's lantern led . . . .

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## CHAPTER I

### THE CURATE'S HOME

THE Rev. Herbert Rashleigh passed a letter very solemnly over the breakfast table to his wife, who had sat for the last ten minutes in oppressive silence with Master Rashleigh on one side and Miss Rashleigh on the other. Rashleigh's breakfast was usually of the heartiest; indeed he had long been well-known in Oxford athletic circles as "The Rasher"; yet this morning the neglected ham and eggs had grown colder and colder, while father's face had darkened from minute to minute in embarrassing silence. Cyril Wilde, his dearest friend and quondam fellow-curate, had just "gone over," and here is the letter which Mrs. Rashleigh read rapidly to herself.

"**MY DEAR HERBERT**,—I have crossed the Rubicon. But let me tell you everything in order. I wrote last when I had just left Cornham for a few weeks' quiet in London, to enable me to make up my mind. I went straight up to Father Angus, of St. Polycarp's,

Piccadilly, and found him at lunch. We had strawberries, and plenty of them, and ice, and plenty of it ; and after lunch I confessed to him and received absolution, and in the evening looked in to the Oratory for Benediction. I went to bed as uncertain as ever. Next day I preached at the High Celebration at St. Polycarp's, amid clouds of incense : my last sermon in an Anglican Church ; and came home to lunch again with Father Angus. More strawberries and more ice. Then I went off and performed what some of our Protestant friends would call 'a glaring act of schism,' by attending Vespers at the Oratory, and a most consoling function it was. As we sang *O Roma Felix*, I wondered when I should next sing that hymn ? Would it be as an outcast, a stranger and foreigner to the City of God, or within her bulwarks ? That question, thank Heaven, has now been answered. I had to go next day to a friend's wedding at Liverpool, and during the three days I was there I heard Mass every day in the Catholic cathedral, to the great disgust of my High Church friends, who bitterly complained that I never entered an Anglican Church at all—which was true. Well, I won't bother you with too many details ; the main point is that, during the next few weeks, I definitely made up my mind to one thing—I would at least resign my Anglican curacy. I knew it was no good consulting the Bishop of Brixton or Fathers Angus and Smoothey. I knew what they would say, and nothing they could say could alter my belief that, apart from Rome, a Christian was outside the Church of Christ and in a state of schism. This being so,

one must get out of the state of schism just as out of any other bad or wicked state in which one happened to be. So I wrote a letter to a Catholic priest, a friend of mine in London, and went straight off to the Oratory, where I heard Vespers again. I had been familiar with this church for many years. I had paid it furtive visits as a schoolboy: what attracted me was the Plain Song Mass music then—but not now—in use. I remember one day being quite overcome on hearing some monks chant the last antiphon in the seventh (the angelic) mode at the Vespers of a Confessor. And sometimes I wish I was a Dominican, in order to enjoy the *Salve Regina* softly sung beside me when *in extremis*. I humbly hope to enjoy Plain Song in the heavenly country, and to be, in my mansion, as far removed from Hummel in B flat, and Gounod in some other key, as possible. However, to return to the Oratory. After service I went into the Common Room to see my friend, who was not there—only another father whom I knew. We had a long conversation. I had no difficulties. The Roman Church was *the Church*, and there was an end of it. He suggested delay. I declined delay. Delay? Why, I might be tempted by the devil, and take the next train to Liverpool or elsewhere. So, late at night, in the dimly-lighted church, I was received into the One Fold of Christ. There was no enthusiasm, there was no elation, there was no gush. It was an act of reason, an act of faith. Long had I been a Catholic in sympathy, in sentiment, in desire; now I was one no longer in fancy, but in fact. It was over. I went

to bed in communion with the Apostolic See. Nothing else seemed of the slightest importance.

“And now, my dear Herbert, let me affectionately urge something of this upon you. In the old days at St. Chad’s, you used to feel as strongly as I did the starveling meanness of our ‘prayerbooky’ services, and the uncertain claim of the Anglican schism to true Apostolic authority. If only you could realise the comfort of sleeping night after night on the bed-rock of St. Peter. . . !”

“Well, my dear?” asked Herbert, as his wife threw the letter back across the table with a gesture of impatience.

“I think it’s very fortunate,” answered that gentle lady with unwonted firmness in her voice, and a flush of defiance on her cheek; “it’s very fortunate that young men who are made like that can find a church of this kind to go over to. . . . Come here, Ursula, and let me wipe your mouth.”

Rashleigh was just such a curate as you may find in hundreds of parishes nowadays: a rather favourable specimen of the High Church curate of the newest generation. At Oxford, where he took a pass degree, his studies (if studies they could be called) had been anything rather than theological or historical. He had just scraped through Smalls and Mods, and passed his Greats by the skin of his teeth. But he had rowed in the ‘Varsity Trials and played cricket and football for his college; and he remained a very fair specimen of the ordinary unregenerate and grown-up

schoolboy until he made up his mind to take Holy Orders, and went to St. Chad's Theological College. Here he found himself under the influence of a man, narrow indeed and ignorant of the world, but thoroughly earnest and enthusiastic. His principal had a passion for the Middle Ages, as that period is understood by orthodox theologians of the present day. He had read most of the Church Histories, was familiar with the lives of the saints as seen through the spectacles of modern compilers, and had even read deeply for himself in the "Fathers." That is, he had studied with loving care a dozen or two of the ascetic and mystical writings in which the great men of the Middle Ages tried to escape from the sordid realities of life around them by dreaming of a new heaven and a new earth ; he had studied these books, and jumped to the conclusion that the men who wrote so beautifully must have lived in a beautiful age. In the same spirit of uncritical reverence, he had spent years in familiarising himself with those allegorical interpretations of the Bible which reigned supreme in days when not one learned theologian in a thousand had even a smattering of the original languages, when a host of barefaced forgeries had gained unquestioned credit by the side of genuine documents, and when the man who had read that Pompey was Emperor of Rome, and that Britain had been colonised by Brutus, passed for a man of sound historical learning. It had never occurred to Canon Beeton that to judge of an age only by its few greatest men is as misleading as it would be to estimate the comparative national wealth of England and

America by comparing the King's income with that of President Roosevelt. He had no real knowledge of the social conditions under which those saints had lived who, at this enormous distance, and through half-a-dozen pairs of spectacles, seemed to him so superhuman in virtue. He had never studied the gradual growth of their legends ; and when the record told him how these men had stayed the course of winds and tides, and raised dead men from the grave, his heart scarcely dared to give a downright *No!* He had no suspicion that even St. Francis, perhaps the most Christ-like of all who have tried to follow in our Lord's steps, began his career of sanctity with a commercial transaction of very dubious honesty ; and that St. Dominic, a name almost as great, once plucked a wretched sparrow alive because it hindered his studies, and because he therefore believed it to be the devil. Canon Beeton never dreamed that the same churchmen who tell us of the miracles of the saints, sometimes tell us also the processes by which other miracles were manufactured, and expect us to share their own admiration of these pious frauds. Like many other extreme religious enthusiasts, he was really a sceptic who, instead of struggling quietly day by day to moderate his critical faculties, had taken the easier course of trampling them altogether under foot except where they also flattered his prejudices. Nobody saw more clearly than he, nobody dissected more unmercifully, the shams and weaknesses of modern society. He was a pitiless critic of all modern thought except that of his own school ; yet he clung with the most

uncritical devotion to what he believed to be the spirit of the Middle Ages. Though Nature had cut him out rather for a geologist than for an artist, he adored Gothic architecture with a passion out of proportion even to its marvellous artistic merit. These buildings were part of his theological faith ; and, as he paced the cathedral aisles, they bred in him a positive loathing for all in modern life that was not framed on the cathedral model. Feeding on his own fancies, under the happy conviction that he was feeding on pure truth, he grew day by day to identify a certain style in architecture, certain tricks of the stonemason, the painter, and the gilder, with a sound rule of faith. He would talk, as others had talked before him, of “a Catholic pattern” in wall-stencilling or in church tiles ; and sometimes, rapt in ecstasy, he looked up to the delicate tracery and colouring of the groined roof with something of that same superstition which had tempted the Hebrews to worship the hosts of heaven instead of the God Who had made them. His reading, earnest as it was, had never gone deep enough to make him realise the true facts of medieval society. He never dreamed how definitely the greatest medieval saints had looked upon the highest architecture and painting rather as hindrances than helps to true devotion. Still less did he imagine that the brain which had planned those marvels of wreathed stone was the brain of an artist no more ascetic, no more decorous in his private life, than many a popular artist of to-day : or that the very stones of the cathedral had been paid for partly out of the fines of unchaste priests, partly by a traffic in

indulgences which one of the greatest medieval chancellors of Oxford described as more immoral still. Moreover, even if he had stumbled across these facts in his reading, they would have made little impression on him; for, though altogether above conscious untruth, he was one of those men who persuade themselves very readily that what they wish is true and good; what they dislike, false and wicked. A man thus constituted can easily build himself a very pretty Utopia in the past. The Canon's conception of the medieval church, clear-cut as it seemed to him, was really a combination of two entirely distinct images, of a kind familiar to photographers. He took his sky (to keep up the metaphor) from the Middle Ages, and his foreground from what he loved most in the modern world; the whole formed a very pretty picture, without too obvious marks of joining. He wished himself back in the Ages of Faith much as the gentleman in Oliver Wendell Holmes' poem wishes himself "a boy again," yet "would have his wife and children too." He longed for a time when most men clung, outwardly at least, to the same form of faith; yet he never reflected that modern toleration, modern justice, and the enormous decrease of crime in the past 600 years—all those liberties and decencies, in short, which we of the twentieth century are apt to accept too thanklessly as the natural birthright of humanity—have really been worked out during the past four centuries only by the constant shock of divergent opinions. In short, Canon Beeton had read history only to find what pleased and edified him; and history, like every other oracle of

God, answers a man in the spirit in which he approaches it. Hating modern Nonconformity, he sought in the Middle Ages of his fancy an Utopia which might justify his dislike of the modern world. To this creature of his own imagination he clung with the enthusiasm of a poet who sees nothing but wrinkles in the everyday wife of his bosom, and nothing but divine charms in some other woman who does not labour under the disadvantage of being his own. And as the Canon, behind his big round spectacles and his ignorance of the world, had many qualities of a real poet, it is no wonder that the students of St. Chad's caught his aversion to the Reformation and admiration for the Middle Ages, and clung to these ideas perhaps all the more obstinately for their greater ignorance. Herbert Rashleigh was only one of many who went in as philistines, rough athletes, or careless place-seekers, and came out High Churchmen of a pattern that would have made poor Keble's hair stand on end. Not being an intellectual man, and having found the examining chaplains indulgent on many points, he had been ordained in a state of almost incredible ignorance as to the history of that Church in which he was now a priest. He might have been able to give you the date of the Nicene Council, and a more or less vague account of what happened there; but of English Church history since the Conquest he could have told you next to nothing. Only he knew very well that the Communion Service of the Anglican Church ought to be called Mass; that the so-called Reformation had made no real doctrinal change in England; that the so-called

Reformers had all been either fools or knaves ; that his Bishop had as little moral right as material power to control his actions ; and that he himself could not, without unfaithfulness to the Catholic cause, give up his incense or his “Hail Mary !”. Moreover, he was all the more certain of these things because he could not have referred you to even the vaguest historical evidence for any one of them. The little leaven of St. Chad’s had simply leavened his whole lump.

There are few more delightful experiences in youth than this—to pick up half-a-dozen shibboleths, to chatter them daily with our own particular friends, and to have the added pleasure of pitying outsiders as old-fashioned philistines. But it would be unfair to imply that Herbert learned no more than this at St. Chad’s ; for he learned some things which satisfied far deeper needs of his nature. He had come to an age at which a man welcomes some personal assurance of religion ; and there is no great religious system, however absurd a face it may show to outsiders, which has not, when taught by living man to living man, enough of true nobility in it to fill a whole life. Moreover, with his increasing seriousness of mind, Herbert had felt doubts not the less disquieting because they were vague and ill-defined, about his future parochial work. He knew very well that he was not above the very moderate intellectual average of the Oxford passman, and that his future flock would contain plenty of cleverer or better educated people of his own age, let alone his seniors. He was an honest man, unwilling to undertake the cure of souls without a reasonable

hope that he could influence men for good : but how was this to be done ? A few months at St. Chad's brought him comfortable assurance on this point, for he learned the doctrines of Apostolical Succession and of the Sacraments in their most absolute form. No man need trouble himself unduly about ignorance of history and theology, so long as he can bring God's bodily presence into the church by a daily miracle ; so long as he is the chosen and almost exclusive channel for conveying divine absolution to the repentant sinner.

Herbert left St. Chad's a changed man, and yet not so deeply changed after all. He was still a very honest, rather matter-of-fact English gentleman, and the veneer of mediævalism, though very complete, was only skin-deep. He still kept a healthy sense of humour on every point but one, and, like most of his class, he enjoyed life, outside the four walls of the church, very much as other good people do. The last two generations, which have witnessed so remarkable a revival of the picturesque side of medieval religion, have been less favourable to its ascetic side ; and if Thackeray were alive to sketch the High Church curate of to-day, he would no longer represent him as having dined off "a little water and a parched pea." Herbert became curate in a populous town, and worked hard among the poor. After some years, feeling the need of a helpmeet for him, he married the only daughter of a rich manufacturer, his churchwarden. Though he was too wise to ruin his body by unnecessary asceticism, he overtaxed it a good deal by his hard work in the slums. His wife, too, was rather

delicate since the birth of their third child, and our friend exchanged his town work for a sole charge under Archdeacon Crossways, in a healthy upland district of the Midlands. Here the semi-rural suburb of Green Hill formed practically his own separate parish, and he exchanged services only occasionally with the Archdeacon or his curate at Minster Summerleigh. In his little district he was soon everybody's friend but his own. He missed, in spite of himself, that whirl and bustle of town life which had kept him from over-much thought. Having now less of the real evils of life to cope with, he became more solicitous of small matters; adopted every new point of ritual or ceremony that came in his way; believed implicitly that, being modern Roman, these things must also be primitive and Catholic; and began to ask himself, logically enough, why he should go thus far in conformity to the See of Peter without going any further. In short, he was one of the many who, when the "crisis" came, found himself deeply pledged to incense, to "reservation," and to the "Hail Mary."

Archdeacon Crossways was a rather advanced High Churchman of the old type. He had shaken hands with Newman in his Anglican days, and had been a trusted pupil of Keble's; but he had a solid look of English common-sense, wore an unbecoming Newgate fringe and a white tie, and in other similar ways aroused grave doubts of his Catholic orthodoxy among the more advanced men of the new generation. He was very sorry to see this trend of thoughts in Rashleigh's mind, but a great deal too wise to say much about it.

He hoped that the curate's own common sense would gradually make him see the impossibility of his position, and that some favourable conjuncture might enable him to regain his footing; but now, instead of the chance he hoped, came the "crisis" and the Archbishop's decision. To this decision the Archdeacon bowed loyally and immediately, being, indeed, rather relieved than otherwise to get rid of extreme ceremonies which he had only inherited from his predecessor. It was the old story: a weak and vain rector had allowed himself to be led on by a clique of maiden ladies and half-pay officers, who, having nothing else in the world to fill their twenty-four daily leisure hours, spent lives perfectly useless to their fellow-men in the elaboration of the worship of God.

Herbert, then, had absolutely refused to abide by the Primate's decision, and it was with difficulty that the Archdeacon prevailed upon him not to defy his Bishop from the first. He promised to think the matter over quietly for a month, and at the end of that time, if conformity still seemed impossible, to retire quietly from his charge. But the Archdeacon, who had the greatest regard for his sterling qualities, was saddened to see how little signs of compromise the passing weeks brought. On the contrary, Herbert seemed more and more to avoid all intercourse with his rector, and to spend more and more time with Father Duvet, the Roman Catholic priest of the little town.

I will not weary you, dear reader, with a description of my second hero, Father Duvet. In the nature of

things, one Roman Catholic priest is very much like another in manners and other externals. I will only add that Father Duvet was a very good companion in secular life, and that nobody would have suspected him of fasts and mortifications, except so far as these could be inferred from the rule of his Church. Though far slimmer than most Continental priests, Father Duvet was rather stouter than the average Englishman, with round, chubby cheeks like a baby, and a very hearty laugh of his own. A man of some natural ability, he had profited by that special professional training with which his Church takes care to equip her priests. Without having read for himself a single treatise of the Fathers, or knowing very clearly whether St. Basil wrote in Greek or Latin, he could quote you hundreds of the most convincing snippets from their works, and had the apologetic pamphlets of the so-called Catholic Truth Society at his fingers' ends. But he made no ill-timed display of these things ; on the contrary, he seemed anxious to show the townsfolk of Summerleigh (who had at first objected strongly to the planting of his little tin chapel in their midst) that a Catholic priest is a very sociable and harmless individual ; and he, like Herbert, would often drop in to smoke and chat with the college masters at their Saturday night reunions in Findlay's rooms, under the roof of the old Minster Lady Chapel.

It was to this rendezvous that the two priests might have been seen walking together on the Saturday night following the receipt of Cyril Wilde's letter, and preceding the fatal Monday on which Herbert had finally

to pronounce himself. Stubborn at first, he had become unsettled of late: nay, in his heart of hearts, he was half conscious of having slid into a false position, and would have been glad of any sudden event that would enable him to draw back and yet save his face. But the more this uncomfortable doubt worked in his inner heart, the more he tried to convince himself that his mind was made up, and that Catholic Principle commanded him to stand firm. He was thus very divided and uneasy in his mind, and very glad to catch at this chance of dismissing the whole subject for a few hours.

The lights of Findlay's lamps showed cheerfully through the traceried windows of what had once been the Lady Chapel. Father Duvet remarked upon the beauty of the effect. "But it's a sad sight!" he added.

"It's more than that, my dear fellow," said Herbert, putting his arm in his friend's as he opened the door; "it's a crime!"

## CHAPTER II

### THE LADY CHAPEL

“HULLO, Ritual and Rome arm-in-arm !”

“Shut up, Blacker, will you—no beastly shop here of any kind. Find a seat, you fellows: Jones ’ll give you drink and cigars. I go diamonds !”

“And I double !” replied Smith ; so the mischievous spark was quenched for a while.

Hardly, however, had the players got into the second hand, when voices came loudly from that corner.

“I say, are you fellows at it again ?”

“Well, you can’t say *I* raised the subject this time,” said Blacker. “If Father Duvet hadn’t spoken. . . .”

“I !” said Father Duvet, the picture of astonishment.

“Well, this time we’ll have it out,” said Herbert interrupting.

“Do what you like, only don’t call yourself a martyr.”

“Did I call myself a martyr ?”

“The Padre did. He spoke of Protestant intolerance.”

“I didn’t put it as bluntly as that.”

"No, you never do, old man. But perhaps you *will* explain bluntly, just for once, why a parson is to be allowed to draw a salary for flying in the face of all he swore when they made him a parson, and calling his nonconformity 'conscientious objections'!"

"You didn't read Cardinal Vaughan's speech at the Catholic Truth Conference about the King's declaration?"

"Is it likely!"

"Well, he put the matter in a nutshell. The King, after having gained the English crown by taking this blasphemous oath, might well become convinced, by God's grace, of the truth of Catholicism. In that case he would at once see that his coronation oath had been unjust, immoral, and untrue: it would therefore cease to bind him, and he would rightly retain the crown, all foolish oaths notwithstanding. You should study the cardinal's whole speech: his reasoning is absolutely faultless. To put it in terms of our friend Rashleigh's present position, it would run: 'No oath to do a wrong thing is binding. I am convinced by now that to sacrifice any particle of Catholic practice because of popular outcry. . .'"

"The outcry of this mob of bishops, I suppose you mean?"

"Or even coercion from any superior authority on earth, save One"—dropping his voice reverently—"Who alone can bind or loose the consciences of all.' Our friend Rashleigh is convinced by now that this would be a base and cowardly act, and so far from its being wrong for him to repudiate an oath taken years

ago in ignorance, it would be a sin in him *not* to repudiate it."

"And to go on drawing his screw, of course."

"Do you suppose it is that miserable money that restrains me?" asked Herbert angrily. He had in fact looked upon himself as a very real martyr during the few weeks of mental struggle, and relished the Padre's defence almost as little as Blacker's attack.

"We needn't be personal—I'm speaking of the principle. Of course, *you* wouldn't starve in any case; I only wish I was as free to chuck my work here when the fancy takes me, with as little reason as you to worry about £ s. d.!"

"Then, perhaps, as you say, we may drop the money question," replied Herbert, overlooking the reference to his wife's fortune with dignified reserve. "Is it a small thing to divorce a man from his parish, and cut him off hopelessly from the work and the people who have become peculiarly his own?"

"Why not, when his own conscience cuts him adrift from the conditions under which he obtained a peculiar ownership in that work and those people? You have a refuge nowadays which has never been possible except in modern times and in Protestant countries—you may set up a church of your own without the least interference from the police or anybody else, and burn as much incense as you like, and preach what you like. What's to hinder you?"

"Only my own conscience, and the guilt of schism," replied Herbert with lofty contempt.

"Exactly! The bishops and all the rest of it are

necessary to your ecclesiastical existence, though you have not the least idea of submitting your slightest whim to their authority, and (thanks to the Protestantism which you repudiate) you are able to do this quite safely—kicking up your heels as rebels, and posing as martyrs all the while ! ”

“ You are right,” put in Father Duvet, blandly, “ you are right in one thing only. Whatever there is of disobedience to authority in this modern world—whatever there is of anarchy—is an inheritance from the Reformation.”

“ Anarchy ! O, thanks for that word ! That’s just what we have here—an ecclesiastical anarchist, a dynamiter, whose conscience tells him to slay everyone in authority, and who is at the same time deeply pained that the authorities do not take more trouble to protect him from the bloodthirsty crowd ! What protects you from Kensit and his rabble ? Only the laws of the land, which you repudiate whenever they touch the Church.”

“ Go on, go on.”

“ And there’s only one remedy for anarchism of any kind. Give the men whose consciences won’t allow them to stand by the formulas to which they swore obedience—and give those members of the congregation who follow their example—a quiet spot, far away from everybody, to worship in together ; and we shall soon have a stream of repentant anarchists sneaking back to worship unobtrusively with the rest of the world, and like the rest of the world ! ”

“ I suppose,” said Herbert, puffing angrily at his

pipe, but making a violent effort to speak in tones of calm contempt, "I suppose you know you're talking utter rot all this time."

"So he is—never mind Blacker, he's a born rotter!"

"Have another go of whisky, old man."

But Blacker was pertinacious. "Look here, Rashleigh, think this one question frankly over, and answer me now. Who are your mainstays in this matter among your congregation? Isn't one of them Colonel Rickshaw, who a dozen years ago turned the whole Portsmouth garrison upside down because somebody put up a cross and some candles or something mildly papistical—but who now, since he's retired and has twelve hours a day to quarrel in, has become a red-hot *Car-tholic*?"

Herbert laughed. "I believe the Colonel *was* Calvinistically inclined in his youth, and I do know he cheats confoundedly at croquet in his old age. Go on."

"Well, then you've got Miss Clackmannan, heaven save the mark! and Miss Wigglesby, and the two Miss Redheads—I never like to speak evil of any womenkind, and God made these, I suppose, after all—and then you had, until lately, the fat old virgin who made a hell of the whole Cottage Hospital—Sister Mary, I think they called her, and who's gone over to the Padre here—and, Padre, I can't too much admire your consummate tact in keeping her in her proper place. Believe me, Rashleigh, (for I hear of things behind your back), those are literally the

only people in your whole congregation who would advise you to go on resisting your Bishop. Now, think it over honestly a moment, and tell me how you'd like to find yourself with a congregation of that sort, even if you could get it without any guilt of schism."

Herbert had never faced this question in the brutal nakedness in which Blacker put it now; and, being an honest man, he felt embarrassed for a reply. But he was relieved by Anstey chiming in from another corner.

"*Apropos* of Sister Mary, Rashleigh, do you know that she prays daily that you may be led to join her—no offence to you, Padre, for you're a man of the world, I know, and have a sense of humour. She told Miss Wigglesby the other day that the one bitter drop in her cup was to leave you out in the cold, and so she was having a novena sung to the intention that you and Lord Halfwayhouse might learn what true Catholicism is."

"Oh, you can see that without any novenas or masses," said Blacker. "Take a return ticket to Rome, or any Italian town, stop a week and take stock of all you see there, and especially watch the clergy and see what a low type they mostly are."

"You're very rude to-night, Blacker."

"Not at all; I simply state a fact. Have you ever been to Rome?"

"No."

"Then believe one who has; or rather wait and let me fetch a big photo I have somewhere of a couple

of hundred clergy come together for some solemn function ; and you shall see if you can pick out of the whole lot a couple of dozen whom, on the strength of their phiz, you would trust with sixpence ! There were two of them once at the next table to me at an inn at Constance ; they didn't know that I understood Latin, and were talking pretty freely to each other. . . . ”

“ But, my dear Blacker, you may spare us all these details, because, even if those particular clergy were as you say, the fact would still remain that Catholicism bears no share of the responsibility. Read Newman's essay on ‘ The Social State of Catholic Countries no Prejudice to the Sanctity of the Church.’ The fact is, that the poison of anarchy has now penetrated everywhere ; and it seems as if, by some mysterious dispensation of Providence, the races which are capable of the most devoted Catholicism are exposed also to the dangers of the most virulent atheism.”

“ Very mysterious, as you say, Padre ; and you think things were really better before the virus of Anarchy came in with the Reformation ? ”

“ Certainly ! England was more prosperous then than it is now, in the truest sense, which supposes unity of faith, content and happiness among the masses of the people, a certain degree of sobriety and morality, and so on. Read Monsignor J. S. Vaughan's splendid ‘ Faith and Folly.’ ”

“ A most attractive and appropriate title ! But do you seriously mean that, if you had the chance, you would go back to the Middle Ages ? ”

"Certainly, if in God's decrees it were possible. The Catholic Church was then indeed the Catholic Church."

"And Rashleigh too? Oh yes, of course, your true Ritualist is *plus royaliste que le roi*."

"I . . . I . . . Yes, I *would* go back," replied Herbert, first hesitatingly and then defiantly. "Yes," he went on, warming to the idea, "whenever I pass the grey walls of this magnificent minster, I dream of what it was in its bright unsullied youth—

'Oh, the good old times of England! Ere, in her evil day  
From their holy faith and their ancient rites the people  
fell away;  
When her gentlemen had hands to give, and her yeomen  
hearts to feel;  
And they raised full many a bead-house, but never a bastile!'

You know those pathetic lines, Father Duvet. And if I had been born by God's grace in those days when Merrie England was Merrie England indeed—when the worker lived on the land—"

"And when more than half the population were serfs, chained to the land, bought and sold with the land."

"Why not? Is there not something worse than mere bodily servitude? At least, in those days, I would have lived my own spiritual life, far from this madding crowd of Nonconformists and Agnostics, dispensing God's sacraments daily to a flock that believed—"

"And Mrs. Rashleigh? . . . "

"And Mrs. . . . how dare you, sir, refer to my

wife? That is the second time you have most unwarrantably brought her name in. You will please not refer to it again."

"Look here, you fellows, leave that wrangling, and listen to Colonel Cooke's yarns. More wonderful than all your Catholic miracles, Rashleigh, and more reasonable than all your scepticism, Blacker. If anyone wants to talk with the Witch of Endor, or fly on a brazen horse, or sit on a piece of carpet and wish himself to Jericho, here's your man!"

"Here are two people who are wishing themselves back in the Middle Ages, so they're just the men for the Colonel. The one can't live in a country whose sovereign is forced to take a blasphemous oath, and the other loses all joy in life at the thought of having to obey his Bishop. Now, then, Colonel, trot out your miracles!"

The Colonel had risen from his chair, a little dark man with bushy black eyebrows. "I am quite ready to do my best," he said, with an ironical smile. "But it needs first of all the hearty consent, for the moment at least, of the gentlemen themselves."

"Consent! Why, my dear Colonel, you have their earnest prayers, and the prayers of a lady who says masses daily——"

"A lady '*who says masses*,'" interjected Father Duvet, with a smile rather of pity than of anger.

"Who says masses daily that they may live to see a real Catholic England."

"If I have really their own prayers and those of their friends, I may be able to do something. But I don't

pretend to do these things myself except now and then, under specially favourable circumstances. Only, if you had seen what I have seen . . . Will somebody bring two basins of water and put them on the table here?"

The rest of the company gathered round the table, impressed by the Colonel's business-like manner, and looking forward to some practical joke; for your schoolmaster is your only true grown-up schoolboy. Rashleigh and Duvet rose too, they scarcely knew why, except that everybody else had got up. Blacker and Findlay came in, bearing each a basin of water from the nearest bedrooms, which they laid solemnly on the table in the middle of the room.

"If you really care to try the experiment," began the Colonel.

"I object very strongly to making a fool of myself to please the present company," protested Duvet.

"Oh, if the gentlemen are unwilling to make the experiment, of course I say no more."

"Except that we shall draw our own conclusions," added Blacker.

All Blacker's words were as red rags to Rashleigh. "You may draw what conclusions . . ." He paused, and everybody understood the pause: ten years ago he would have said in the immortal words of Besant and Rice "what conclusions you d—— please." . . . "Look here, Duvet, let's treat the fool according to his folly and lend ourselves to this trick, and have peace and quietness for the rest of the evening."

"The simple point is, do you really wish to go back

in vision to the Middle Ages?" said the Colonel, fixing them from underneath his bushy eyebrows. "Without that, I am powerless."

"Certainly I do," said Rashleigh, who had worked himself up into a state of wishing anything so long as it were only in contradiction to Blacker. "Not that I believe for one moment in any of your rotten visions; but if it *were* possible to live in the days before the Reformation, certainly I would. So far, at least, I entirely agree with my friend here."

"And your friend wishes it too?"

"I protest against the whole of this silly farce," said Duvet with a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders. "But, if anybody is really interested to know what I think on the serious part of the question—a subject too serious perhaps" (he added, in a lower and more unctuous tone) "to be discussed amid cigar-smoke and glasses of whisky—so far as that is concerned, every Catholic knows that we are in exile now, and that our golden age was five or six hundred years ago—when these walls were built which I only hope we have not desecrated by irreverent mirth." He looked up at the delicate vaulting of the ceiling, and felt that he had scored a point.

"Then take hands, gentlemen, and each plunge your faces into this water just for thirty seconds or so—as long as you can go comfortably without taking fresh breath—and do your best for a moment to imagine yourself under this vaulted roof at the time when it was first dedicated to sacred uses."

But the priest still hung back, and the company

looked half-puzzled, half-amused, not knowing how far to take the whole thing seriously. Rashleigh, however, grasped his friend's hand, and cried, "Let's have the silly trick over at once and get rid of all these Kensitisms, and smoke our pipes in peace!"

"The greatest of your popes were given to dabbling in magic, I've always understood," said the Colonel, fixing his piercing eyes now on Duvet.

"Oh, if you imagine I hang back because I believe in your magic! . . . What are we to do, then?"

"Simply plunge your face in the water, till you find you want to breathe again. And think of this building in all its glory, and yourself part of its glory, in the grand old times."

Archdeacon Crossways, who sometimes lent his weighty patronage to Findlay's reunions, entered at this moment. He stood spell-bound to see his curate and the Romanist priest, hand in hand, in the act of dipping their faces into two basins of water. They for their part were blissfully unconscious of his presence, and thought only of what the Colonel had suggested to them; for there was something mesmeric in the little man's manner.

There was a dead silence in the room as they dipped their faces. Then a sudden darkness;—a shifting of solid walls like the changes of a kaleidoscope, a feeling that the floor was sinking under them—a choking and a reeling of the brain—and then the two friends found themselves sitting alone, gasping for breath, on the cold floor of the church aisle, with the moonlight slanting in through the painted panes.

himself that he liked this—"there's nothing *prayer-booky* about the whole thing. It looks so thoroughly Catholic."

"H'm! I've always been accustomed to associate a little more splendour of expression with the true Catholic worship. But of course one must make allowance for these earlier ages."

"And remember, we are at a time when Protestantism doesn't exist. Not even Wycliffe—at least I think not—Wycliffe comes *after* 1320, doesn't he?"

"I think he does," answered Father Duvet, doubtfully. . . . "This is rather awkward in some ways," he added. "I wish we'd known beforehand; we might have prepared ourselves, you know."

Meanwhile the daylight broadened; and, their first curiosity sated, our pilgrims began to take serious stock of their situation. With all their theoretical admiration of the Middle Ages, they had just enough inkling of real history to know that strange things had been done in those times; that faith had at least sometimes shown itself in mad superstitions, and that superstition is apt to mistake everything unfamiliar or uncanny for a work of the devil's. All the gates of the minster were locked, except one little turret door which led by a winding stair to a room above the porch. Creeping up on tiptoe, and peering in through the crack of the unfastened door, they found to their relief that this room was untenanted: yet it bore some signs of occasional habitation. In one corner, at the head of a disordered pallet-bed, stood a bow and quiver, a rebeck, and a short sword. In another

corner hung a forester's suit of Lincoln green, a pair of tight hosen striped yellow and red, and a short jacket of no less startling colours. A cassock and a pair of sober grey hosen were thrown on the bed. A crucifix, a set of rough wooden beads as big as marbles, a plain oak chest, a rickety joint-stool, and a dice-box completed the furniture of the apartment. The whole room was in such dirt and disorder that it looked rather like a lumber-room than a priest's chamber; but the sight of the clothes overbore all other reflections in our friends' minds. Necessity knows no law; it was obviously impossible to flaunt the barbarous dress of the twentieth century in medieval England; and, after all, two or three sovereigns left on the bed would more than reward the owner for the two suits of clothes which, on closer inspection, were evidently neither very new nor very clean. Herbert had now every reason to congratulate himself on the happy chance that had brought him to Findlay's rooms with nearly £40 of school-money in his pocket. Whatever temptation he and Father Duvet might otherwise have felt to quarrel over the clothes was set at rest by the obvious adaptation of the cassock and grey hosen to Rashleigh's long limbs, and of the more elastic parti-coloured nether garments to the stout little priest. Much of their superfluous length was taken up by their horizontal extension, as he drew them with some difficulty up his burly legs; the rest was hidden at one end by a pair of high-laced brown hunting-boots, and at the other by the jacket, which reached to a far more decent length on his

body than on its original owner's. The cassock, on the other hand, was not much too short for Herbert, and, after pinning his watch and money-bag carefully to the breast of his shirt, and slipping his handkerchief, his wife's portrait, and his letters up the sleeves of his cassock, he stuffed both the discarded suits hastily up the chimney, and found leisure to amuse himself with poor Father Duvet's attempts to settle comfortably into his own mountebank's costume.

"Wouldn't the green have been better?" he laughed.

"No, I think not, my dear fellow. You see I looked carefully at both of them, and" . . . the speaker seemed to lose his thread a moment, and bent suddenly down to pinch his calf . . . "And . . . what was I saying? . . . Oh, yes . . . no, I *think* this was the least . . . I think it was the better of the two. Besides," he added, with a somewhat forced laugh, "one may as well look the part while one is about it . . . If yours were tighter, and a few more buttons, it would really look very much like a modern cassock."

"Very—to look at. Well, we must make the best of them for a while, till we can get away and buy new clothes without suspicion. We must walk circumspectly, old fellow, and give no offence. It'll be rather difficult at first, of course. We . . . we must tell the truth, mustn't we?"

"Oh, of course . . . with natural reservations, that is."

"Yes, yes, with natural reservations. After all, it

is but a passing trial of our faith, and it will be a great privilege to see real unadulterated Catholicity—Good heavens ! ”

Duvet turned round at this startled exclamation, and saw a big red face at the window, strained into an expression of intense pain, and followed slowly by a big red body which struggled with surprising elasticity through the narrow gap left by one broken stanchion, and soon stood beside them on the floor. The new comer sat down on his pallet, and wiped his streaming brow with a corner of his hood. “ ‘Twill be my death some day,’ he panted, in what sounded like a broad north-country dialect. “ ‘Twill be my death ; and then they’ll be loth to lack honest John Cartwright ! But how came ye here, masters ? ”

“ Not by *your* way,” answered Rashleigh with some disgust, noting now for the first time a rope-ladder that hung from the window-bars.

“ Cokkès bones ! hearken now how daintily ‘a speaketh, as ‘twere some castle madam, with the ends of a’s lips and the tip of a’s tongue ! ‘Not by *your* way ! ’ ” he repeated, mimicking the modern accent—“ then I take it I must have forgot once more to lock the minster doors ; i’ faith, I was much troubled last night, and I must bear the brunt on’t again in Chapter ! Well, well, John Cartwright’s back is broad enough to bear it all ! ‘Not *your* way,’ quotha. Nay, thou cainard, but that will come soon enow, when ye shall have been here a month or twain, and shall have learnt the smack of fat Marjorie Higgins’ ale ! Ey, *benedicite !* our two new vicars-

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choral, as help me God ! and dight already in the dresses of John Hall and Barnaby Bates that hung on our wall here ! ”

“ If you want the gold . . . ” cried Herbert, feeling for his bag.

“ Nay, nay, bring out your gold to-night at the ale-house, and that shall be seen. John Cartwright is old and weary, and would fain sleep now; but ye shall find him a good fellow by the pot and the dice-box in his own good time. Peter ! fellow, thou that art clad as a squire, knowest thou that this is the day of the Archbishop’s visitation ? ”

“ Methinks, sirrah, my garments will pass muster as well as thine,” replied Duvet, doing his best to imitate the speech and accent of his interlocutor.

“ Pass mustard ! ay, that’s the word ; pass mustard and verjuice and vinegar when little Ralph Grey cometh to visit this Chapter, with his assessors and his scribes, and his score of stout varlets riding at his heels. God’s body ! ‘a made me stand barefoot in my shirt of penance within this same minster three years agone, before the bones of holy St. Waltheof on the altar there, with a waxen taper of three pounds’ weight in my hand, and a fellow at my heels with a rod of birchen twigs, which had smarted me sore had he not been mindful to lay on as upon a friend and fellow-sufferer. But, Mary ! all that is now clean forgot. There is none that could accuse me now but one, and she durst not for very fear. . . . And now, my masters, your butterfly shall change into your sad-faced worm again.”

During all this monologue John Cartwright had been busy unlocking and rummaging in the chest, from which he presently produced a cassock and hosen only one degree less rusty than those worn by Rashleigh, and envied now by Duvet, who was seriously disquieted by the hints of a coming archiepiscopal visitation. "Gramercy, friend," he now put in, "canst thou not lend me a cassock—I would say, a long black robe such as that. I have gold . . ."

"Nay, nay, 'go thou to them that sell,' as holy Lazarus said to the rich fool in the Gospel. And when once the visitation is begun, see thou which of us twain shall draw the longer cut—thou, who pratest as if thou wert come flying hither as an angel from heaven, or poor honest John Cartwright, who crept in but now through the shot-window, but who has a *capam rotundam, botanatam et clausam* to don for the presence of the Lord Archbishop. . . . Cokkès bones!" he murmured, letting himself fall on the old stool and holding his head in his hands; "would to God I were still in my warm bed at Green Hill, as I had surely been but for his lordship, sacristan or no sacristan!"

Green Hill! The words brought a sudden twinge of regret to Rashleigh's heart. They reminded him again of his wife and children sleeping through this summer dawn in the little rose-wreathed cottage, so near in space and yet five or six centuries away. He took out his handkerchief and blew his nose violently.

"Peter!" cried honest John, "what have we here ?

A fellow who beareth a napkin in his sleeve to wring his nose withal!"

"How else should he?" asked Rashleigh in unguarded wonder.

"How else?" John Cartwright suited the action to the word.

\* \* \*

"'Tis thus that the ploughman doth in my country," remarked Rashleigh.

"'Tis thus that my lord the King doth in *my* country, thou barrel full of folly, as I have seen with mine own sinful eyes, before the shrine of holy St. Waltheof here—save only that a's royal hood was of scarlet silk lined with minever and curiously embroidered with gold and seed-pearls—and a's royal nose, as I may safely swear, of less manly proportions and a sicklier hue than that of honest John Cartwright. The Lord King beareth no napkin in a's sleeve—nay, nor a's gracious father neither, when a dined here at the cost of the chapter on the way to his last war against the Scots. . . . A napkin to wring a's nose withal!" he caught the corner of the handkerchief and twitched it roughly from Rashleigh's sleeve, bringing out at the same time that miniature photograph of Mrs. Rashleigh which the curate had put away so carefully. Rashleigh stooped hastily to pick up this dear memento, but the other had pounced on it like a hawk, caught by the glitter of the silver frame.

"Give me that picture!" cried Herbert.

"His leman, as I live," sneered Cartwright, holding the picture at arm's length. Herbert, purple with

passion, gripped him by the throat, shook him like a rat, and flung him on the wretched bed, from which, as he recovered breath, he began to gasp out foul oaths and threats of vengeance. Meanwhile Rashleigh glared defiance at him as he wound the chain of the portrait carefully round his neck.

“Come down into the church,” cried Duvet, fearing further violence; and Rashleigh allowed himself to be led quietly down the stairs.

“Do you know that you have incurred the greater excommunication *ipso facto*, by laying violent hands on a priest?”

“My dear Duvet, I would have laid violent hands on the Pope himself! . . . Pardon me, old fellow; . . . I’ll do any penance for this afterwards, but don’t talk to me just now. There are things you can’t understand.”

“Remember the trial of our faith.”

“Yes, yes, I was wrong—very wrong and hasty. But I say, old man, no handkerchief! He didn’t even know one when he saw it! And do you suppose they ever sweep this church?”

The broad daylight did indeed show that the church floor followed Italian rather than modern English traditions in the matter of cleanliness; but the two friends picked their way speedily towards the vestry, hastened by the clamorous ringing of the minster bells, and by the sight of two or three other figures hurrying on before them.

It was evidently their best policy to show as bold a front as possible; so Duvet followed close on

Rashleigh's heels, and seeing a row of surplices hanging near the door, caught the first that came to hand. It was fortunate for him that the real medieval surplice was very far from the correct modern Catholic pattern ; in those ruder days, a short surplice was a shame and a reproach to its wearer : the correct model was as long and ample as the Low Church garment of a generation ago ; and that into which Duvet had slipped covered him now to the very heels of his boots. The rest had already gone forward into the choir ; Rashleigh and Duvet followed them, and took their places, as two new vicars-choral, in the lower stalls. Here, in the choir, the dim light that filtered in through the narrow windows of painted glass was eked out by some score of wax tapers, and for the first few minutes Rashleigh felt himself again. But the singing had just begun, and to his unpractised ear it sounded a very undignified gabble. Moreover, the officiants lounged about in their stalls, laughed and talked with each other at intervals, and invariably began the responses half-way through the verse. They behaved, in short, in the way so familiar to students of medieval chapter visitations, but so little suspected by the general public of to-day. It seemed to poor Rashleigh that he must have found his way to a particularly unfortunate stall ; the seat and sides were smeared with candle-grease, and there were other indications which reminded him uncomfortably of his late enemy Cartwright. Try as he might he could not shut out the voices of men and women chatting irreverently in the aisle behind the beautiful fretwork of the screen ;

with which voices was presently mingled that of honest John, coming in late as usual to his somewhat fitful and irregular service of God. A moment after, the big red-faced man came swaggering in, took his place in a stall exactly opposite to our friends, and began amusing himself with a stentorian *fauburdon*, or bass-accompaniment out of his own head, which seemed to afford him a satisfaction proportionate to the confusion which it spread among the rest of the choir. Like Chaucer's friar,

“ His eyen twinkled in his hed aright  
As don the sterres in a frosty night,”

and he winked across at the end of each verse towards some kindred spirit who had begun fauburdoning also, after his own fashion, in a stall above Duvet's head.

Duvet himself, who had been in Italy, was far less distracted than Rashleigh by all these little eccentricities, and had succeeded in picking up the thread of the psalmody very much to his own satisfaction. It pleased him to think what an indispensable guide he would be to Rashleigh in this their new life, and how soon he would bring him to see that there was no mean between modern agnosticism and whole-hearted submission to the See of St. Peter. So he threw out his chest and chanted in his best what-a-good-boy-am-I voice, “ *In sœcula sœculo-o-orum*— Good God! what was that? ”

“ *Hot waxula waxulo-o-orum*, ” chanted the fauburdon above his head in brutal glee. It was indeed wax, a drop of burning wax, and poor Duvet's tonsure was fresh and clean-shaved for Sunday! The mere wound

of the flesh may indeed heal after a week or so, but there are wounds of the heart which bleed silently for ever. In later years, when he had developed an interest in medieval records proportionate to his earlier indifference, it was with keen sympathy that he read the sad words penned in 1330 by good Bishop Grandisson of Exeter: "We have heard, not without grave displeasure, how certain Vicars and other Ministers of our Cathedral, to their own damnation and to the scandal of the Church, laugh and titter together at the solemn time of Divine Service; and some who occupy the upper stalls cast in jest the droppings or snuffings of their candles, purposely and unprovokedly, upon the hair or the bare crowns of those below them; whereby the Devil taketh occasion to breed open discord or secret rancour between one minister and another."

## CHAPTER IV

### VISITATION

THE Archbishop had come : he had been received, as was his due, in solemn procession and with peals of bells ; High Mass had been sung, and *Preciosa* had been read in the Chapter-house. The edifying legend for this day was that of St. Oudoce of Llandaff, who, lacking a cup to drink from, fashioned from a pat of butter which stood before him a golden goblet, " which is still kept as a holy relic." And now, enthroned in state above the Chapter, the great prelate was enquiring into the finances, the public morals, and the spiritual state of the dean, the canons, and the vicars-choral. His lordship himself looked extremely bored by the whole affair, and threw as much of the work as he could upon his clerk, a sharp-featured man who, but for his dress and tonsure, might at any moment have passed for a smart London lawyer. Our two friends had ensconced themselves in a quiet corner, Father Duvet wrapped in an old blue cloak which he had found in a cupboard, and which concealed fairly completely his unclerical garb ; and Rashleigh, too much interested in the drama before him to consider whether he himself ran any risk. As the clerk droned out in a

monotonous voice the usual articles of enquiry, the Archbishop nodded in lazier and lazier good humour at the satisfactory nature of each reply, and congratulated himself that the tone of the Chapter should be so much improved since his last visit three years ago. The dean had indeed reported certain small negligences and laxities in the services and other common duties ; one or two of the clergy had made similar trifling complaints for their own parts ; it had been found that some of the church furniture, books, and vestments needed repair ; otherwise, Summerleigh Minster showed a very clean bill, and the Archbishop was on the point of dismissing the Chapter with his blessing, when the clerk rose and whispered a word in his ear, looking as he spoke towards our friend Cartwright. This gentleman, with his crony, Bull, had specially amused our two friends by the lamb-like innocence which they had displayed under the Archbishop's interrogations. From these interrogatories it appeared that they, with three or four others, had anything but a spotless record for the past. In fact, what with breaches of the rule of clerical celibacy, tavern-haunting, dice-playing, brawling at divine services, and other slighter offences, the Archbishop, on looking through the notes of past visitations, found a very heavy list against each of these names. He expressed, however, as in duty bound, the charitable hope that all this had been amended ; and, while no voice was raised to protest the contrary, all the interested parties had answered in chorus that these past offences had long since been repented and washed out by due

ecclesiastical penance. The Archbishop had seemed for a moment to hesitate, at which the suspected parties claimed with one accord to be admitted to "compurgation."<sup>1</sup> The Archbishop replied courteously that, there being no accuser on this occasion, he need not trouble them even to go through that form; and it seemed strange that Cartwright, instead of appearing relieved at this reply, should scowl across the room at a ferret-faced vicar-choral in the other corner and shake his fist furtively at him. Carefully as it was concealed, this gesture attracted just enough notice from the clerk to make him look in the direction for which it was intended, and there he marked a pair of red and restless eyes that had long been trying to catch a glance from him, and of which the one most remote from Cartwright now closed into an unmistakable wink. Hence his whisper to the Archbishop, which caused the prelate to break off abruptly in his bland periods. "But," he continued, "forasmuch as the wisdom of our predecessors hath oftentimes thought fit to supplement the public visitation by a private visitation also, we now command that all canons and

<sup>1</sup> The most usual procedure for the trial of clerical offenders in the Middle Ages; it consisted in the accused swearing to his own innocence, with the support of a certain number of other persons who might offer to swear belief in the truth of his oath. Once safely through this ordeal, the accused was acquitted; and to those who do not know the real life of the Middle Ages it must seem strange indeed that so deliberate a temptation to perjury should have been commonly offered. Gascoigne, the great Chancellor of Oxford, in the fifteenth century, publicly branded this system as offering "an occasion of intolerable iniquity."

vicars-choral depart from hence into the church, there to await our good pleasure, save only those whom we shall designate to be examined here privily by ourselves." At this the countenances of most of the clergy fell visibly; and Cartwright muttered under his breath a foul oath.

There was no help for it, however; so all trooped out into the church. A woman slipped rapidly forward from behind one of the choir pillars where she had been lurking, and came up to Cartwright with a pale, anxious face.

"How fares it this time, dear heart?"

A curse and a blow from the ruffian, and the poor creature turned and crept off without a word through the priests' door. It was only by the motion of her shoulders that Rashleigh saw she was sobbing.

"Coward!" he cried, taking a step towards Cartwright; but the brute had turned away, and a moment's reflection showed how useless it would be to interfere. Moreover, overwearied and hungry as he was, Rashleigh felt after the events of the past night as if this were all a mere dream—a pageant big indeed with teaching for himself, but quite beyond his control. Each fresh sight and sound found him believing, yet not believing; a state of double consciousness which had become so familiar to him during his late attempts to justify his ecclesiastical position that it struck him with no incongruity now. Indeed, it amused far more than it shocked him to watch through the carved screen how the minster clergy walked and stood about in groups, talking and gesticulating all together "like so

many foreigners," as he thought, while each waited for the fatal summons to appear before the Archbishop. After a while there was a general stir: the special interviews seemed to be over, and the clergy began trooping into the Chapter-house again. Rashleigh and Duvet lingered doubtfully behind their pillar until, finding themselves espied by the ferret-eyed vicar-choral, they made a virtue of necessity and followed the rest.

The Archbishop had already scolded himself purple in the face, and looked dangerously apoplectic. A torrent of accusations still flowed from his mouth: grave and petty offences strangely mingled together, as it seemed to Rashleigh. The clerk, business-like and impassive, sat by his side, registering crime and punishment with the matter-of-fact brevity with which they may be found recorded in the still-surviving registers of Ripon, Southwell, Beverley, Wells, Exeter, and half a dozen other great churches. As he wrote each paragraph, he read it aloud for approval. Several of the clergy were found to have relapsed into incontinence, but had shed salutary tears and given promise of amendment: they were therefore let off again with a solemn warning, and stood together in one corner of the Chapter-house, their eyes still swollen, and their cheeks still furrowed with grimy rivulets. Cartwright was again accused of incontinence, convicted, and confessed:—Item, of revealing the secrets of the vicars' hall to Christina Saynton. Item, of walking in the aisles during service and talking with suspected characters in the choir. Item, of entering the choir late and

leaving early. Item, of sleeping during service. Item, of singing *fauburdon* during his waking moments, to the discomfort of his fellow vicars. Item, of striking Ferret-eyes with a dagger. At which accusation, honest John thrust his hand again into his bosom, with a malignant scowl at Ferret-eyes, who shrank nearer to the Archbishop. The prelate caught the gesture and the look, and commanded that the offender should forthwith forfeit his weapon: a punishment which would seem of little efficacy so long as there were other daggers to be had at Summerleigh. Cartwright alone of all the offenders troubled to shed no tears; he knew his own case had gone beyond that stage, and was prepared to bear punishment which, after all, would be partly spiritual. For his incontinence, which by Chapter statute ought to have cost him his benefice long ago, he was sentenced to a fine of 13*s.* 4*d.*, and three days' suspension from sacred duties. For the assault he was fined a pound—the equivalent of some £20 modern currency—and, after begging the Archbishop's pardon on his knees and making a surly promise of amendment which sounded as if he had learned it by rote on former occasions, he rose again and was on the point of retiring. At this moment he caught sight of our two friends standing close by, and his eyes light up with malicious joy. "My Lord Archbishop," he cried, "an it be so dear a game to kiss a wench or lay one's finger on one's fellow clerk, what think ye of these men here? Here is one who beareth in his sleeve the portrait of his leman framed all in silver, and another who hideth a

squire's dress under his old cloak—foul brawlers and swashbucklers both : I bear yet on my throat the prints of this man's fingers."

" What is this man's name ? " asked the Archbishop, frowning at Rashleigh ; " and how is it that thou and thy fellow were not at my privy examination even now ? "

" We are but newly come this morning, my lord," answered Duvet persuasively ; " poor vicars-choral, at your lordship's service."

" Ay, sent here doubtless by Master Bittering and Master Swerdeston, who contumaciously absent themselves from all our visitations, and who serve their stalls—or shall I say desecrate the same—by sending hither vagabond priests for a few weeks at a time ! Is it not so ? are ye not here in the name of Masters Bittering and Swerdeston ? "

" Even so, my lord," replied Duvet, treading as he spoke on Rashleigh's toe.

" And thou, is this defamation true : hast thou indeed the portrait of thy leman in thy sleeve ? "

" My lord," said Rashleigh, " it is true." He saw the uselessness of all explanation before a judge in whose law there was no room for honest clerical marriage. He made up his mind to accept the inevitable misunderstanding as a punishment for his sins, and was ready to accept cheerfully any penalty which might be inflicted.

" Another of them ! " sighed the Archbishop wearily, turning to his clerk. " Write now that this vicar-choral—by what name shall we call thee ? "

"Herbert Rashleigh, my lord."

Luke, the clerk, made an ear-trumpet of his hand and raised his eyebrows enquiringly.

"Herbert Ragsleeve!" cried out Cartwright from behind him. "Beareth a linen rag in a's sleeve to wring a's nose withal, for all the world like a clouted babe!"

"Herbert, surnamed Ragsleeve," wrote the clerk without a change of muscle, and repeating his words in the same indifferent voice, "confesseth to the truth of the accusation wherewith he is defamed with . . . what name shall I write for the woman?"

"Write Agnes," answered Rashleigh from between his clenched teeth, after a moment's pause.

"What, Agnes Webster, with whom three years agone Master John Cartwright . . . ?"

"No, my lord."

"Agnes, called the Red, with whom Master Bull and Sir Geoffrey Malin . . . ?"

"My lord," said Rashleigh, controlling himself by another mighty effort, "she dwelleth not here: it is in the diocese of London, where I received my holy orders, that we first lived as man and wife."

"Ay, as man and wife of the devil's joining!" cried the Archbishop, with more warmth than he had hitherto shown; "even as a member of Christ is joined with a harlot . . . God in Heaven! when will this plague depart from Thy afflicted Church? . . . And the Archdeacon hath taken gold of thee for all these years, that thou mightest wallow undisturbed in thy sin? . . . We have heard only too truly how

these things are done in our brother's diocese of London ; but may the Almighty look to it ! ” . . . The Archdeacon, I say, took gifts to leave thee in thy sty ? ”

“ The Archdeacon left me undisturbed, my lord.”

“ Body of God ! ” cried the Archbishop again. “ Well might the learned and holy father, John of Salisbury, write his treatise on the question whether any archdeacon can come to salvation ! Ay, and bishops and archbishops too, for we must fear to be found on the one part like Rehoboam, who had no mercy, but drove the Lord's folk to rebellion, or, on the other part, like unto Eli, that suffered the wickedness of his evil sons. . . . Your letters of orders ? ” he asked abruptly.

“ They are not here, my lord.”

“ It is even as I suspected. Thou shalt bring them to me before the Feast of St. Michael next ensuing in my palace of York, or wheresoever else I may be found, on pain of a fine of £10 to the fabric of St. Peter's Minster in York. And for thy swinish sins already committed thou shalt pay forthwith to that same fabric, together with these thy companions in iniquity, the sum of one mark each, in good coin of the realm. . . . Who is this thy fellow, dressed like a ribald or popinjay swashbuckler ? ” For while the prelate had been rating poor Rashleigh the Dean and other zealous members of the Chapter had seized the chance of further diverting attention from themselves by stripping poor Duvet of his old blue cloak and displaying him in all his shame of red and yellow stripes. “ By whom wast thou ordained ? ”

Duvet cast a piteous look at Rashleigh. "I . . . was ordained in a far-off diocese."

"But by what bishop, Sir Popinjay?"

"By the Lord Bishop of Plymouth," blurted out Duvet, with as much assurance as he could muster.

The Archbishop looked puzzled, and conferred one moment with his clerk. "There is no such diocese in this realm," he presently continued; "who then is this bishop of whom thou pratest?"

"He is a bishop," replied Duvet, stoutly, "*in partibus infidelium*." It was galling to find himself at such a disadvantage in Rashleigh's presence, and yet among true Catholics.

The Archbishop's brow darkened. "Ha, Plymouth!" cried he, as a new light dawned on him. "Plymouth? Dartmouth, thou wouldest have said. Speakest thou not of that vagabond friar whereof my brother of Exeter hath lately reported to me? of that lord who beareth himself here in England as Bishop of Damascus *in partibus infidelium*, and who trailed his folly through the town of Dartmouth some months since, flaunting among the lewd folk of the market-place and the tavern a certain ring which he boasteth himself to have received from our lord the Pope, together with a commission to perform episcopal acts in these our English dioceses, thereby defrauding the lawfully appointed prelates of this realm? Speakest thou of that same deceiver, or have we yet others of the same sort, seducing the silly and ignorant folk, and giving daily occasion of scandal to the weaker brethren?"

"My lord," stammered the unfortunate priest.

“Master Luke,” interrupted the Archbishop, without paying further attention to Father Duvet, “thou shalt engross the same injunction for this piebald hedge-priest as for the other two vicars-choral whereof it hath been detected to me that they ride abroad in gaudy and secular apparel and bear themselves to the scandal of their priestly dignity. And I pray ye, Master Dean, that ye see more closely to the correction of such offences within this your minster, and that ye amend in your own house that ye wot of, and whereof I spake to you even now in private.” He passed his hand wearily over his brow. “Are we at an end now, Master Scayff?”

“Your lordship’s predecessor of pious memory, in inflicting fines for concubinage to the profit of St. Peter’s fabric, was ever wont to require further an abjuration of the suspected woman.”

“Well thought of, Master Scayff. Do thou read the abjuration, and let these six culprits come forward and swear.”

The clerk turned up the page in his register and read out in a matter-of-fact voice the formula by which A. B. solemnly abjured henceforth for ever the company of C. D., whether in sickness or in health, excepting only in church or market and in the presence of honest company. The other five laid their hand on the Book of Gospels and took the oath with a glib unction born of long familiarity, but Rashleigh stood silent without raising his hand to the book. The blood mounted again to the Archbishop’s face. “By St. John of Beverley!” he began.

“My lord!” pleaded Rashleigh, meekly kneeling with bowed neck at the prelate’s feet, and thus displaying, as ill-luck would have it, a thick crop of hair destitute of the least pretence of tonsure. The Archbishop seized him passionately by these unlucky locks and tugged with such good will that Rashleigh found himself grovelling in the dust—the very literal dust, with other nameless admixtures—on the Chapter-house floor, in which position, before he could rise, the infuriated prelate spurned him thrice with a riding-boot painfully pointed at the toe. The next moment Rashleigh had risen and stood with clenched fists facing the Archbishop, who for his part seemed again on the verge of an apoplectic fit. Half a dozen sturdy priests threw themselves upon Rashleigh. “Take the ribald hence,” roared the prelate, “and feed him with the bread of affliction and the water of affliction until I determine further concerning him.”

## CHAPTER V

### DISILLUSION

RASHLEIGH had been some three hours now in the gloomy room which served both as library and as prison to the canons and vicars-choral of Summerleigh Minster. The heavy oak presses had once no doubt been full of books, but the most valuable had disappeared one by one during half-a-dozen generations of steady mismanagement and rapidly increasing debts; and the dilapidated and mouldering remnants lay strewn at random about the shelves or the ground. The windows were high and narrow, admitting no air but through an occasional broken pane; an odour of damp and decay struggled with other less savoury suggestions that came from the rushes on the floor. The uninviting pallet, on which Rashleigh flung himself at first, soon proved pregnant of even more than met the eye. He raised a pile of books which enabled him to peep through one of the lancet windows; here he could see the west end of the minster, a corner of the church-yard, and a bit of the Vicar's Close. The early evening sun lingered lovingly on the clean white façade, fresh from the mason's chisel, and played merrily on the gilded vanes that flickered on the pinnacles behind.

Here and there a white coif or a gay garment flitted across the churchyard path ; and all the pleasant sounds of a summer evening came faintly to his ears. But even this scene had its strange contrasts ; the graves were overgrown with nettles, among which geese snatched at the scanty blades of grass ; and hogs wallowed or rooted up the ground as their fancy took them. On one of the stones, half hidden by a projecting buttress, sat a dingy ragged figure of a girl, raising her face now and then from her hands to look wistfully towards the Vicar's Close. He could see little of her features through the cracked pane which served him as an uneasy spy-hole ; but what little he could see reminded him painfully of his own wife. However, he steadfastly put away that thought as a temptation ; he was come to see the ages of faith, to live in the ages of faith, and to learn all that God had to teach him through this vision, with a mind as unclouded as might be by all earthly ties or earthly interests. He climbed down again, and arranged two or three other books as a seat. He set himself to meditate, to meditate strictly : what was God's will with him in all this ? But it was very difficult to fix his thoughts, even apart from the physical discomforts of his present state. Darkness crept over his prison, and, when next he climbed to the window, the windows of the vicars' hall were bright with lights. It was evident that the good vicars, having supped at five with other honest folk, were celebrating in a "rere-supper" their deliverance from the snares of the Archbishop. The ragged girl's figure hung about the door of the hall now, he could see it every now and

then, dark against those festive lights. He dropped down at last, faint and languid with hunger ; he even braved the dingy pallet again, and lay there yearning even for his bread of affliction and water of affliction. When, however, the key turned in the door, it was to admit no less welcome a visitor than Duvet, bearing a savoury steaming dish and a pitcher of wine. Duvet's eyes sparkled and his face was flushed, doubtless with the intoxication of the good news he brought.

“ We sent the Archbishop off in the best of humours at six o'clock,” he said, “ and you're going to be let out to-night, the Dean says. The Archbishop was very sorry to have lost his temper with you ; you'll be glad to hear that he confessed and got absolution before he sat down to supper. I say, they do know how to cook for a fast-day, these fellows ! What do you think of that rice boiled in milk and almonds ? Doesn't it melt in your mouth ? ”

“ Ripping ! ” murmured Rashleigh, in whose mouth half the plateful had already melted.

“ And if you'd seen the salmon, straight out of the water this morning, and with such a curd on it. The Dean told them to send you some, but there was none left. Our friends Cartwright and Bull did wonders ; they're at their wine still, so's the Dean. I left him bawling out '*Bibamus papaliter !*' and telling racy anecdotes. I say, old man, we've got among rather a queer lot of clergy here. I never dreamed that grown-up men could behave and talk so exactly as we used to do in the Scotch College at Rome.”

“ I know nothing about Rome,” answered Rashleigh

a little drily, "but it is plain to me that our experience with these particular men is designed for a special trial of our faith."

"I think you do them injustice," answered Duvet, with an optimism perhaps not altogether unconnected with his recent convivialities. "They seem to me very decent folk at the bottom. The Dean was delighted at one or two Irish stories I brought out for his benefit; and I flatter myself I'm in high favour with him at present. It all depends on getting hold of men by the right end, after all; or perhaps it is," he continued, in a somewhat patronising tone, "that I understand them better; there is a certain subtle flavour of Catholicism that nobody can catch without having lived all his life among Catholics. Even your great Newman, now . . . But then," he added, as if suddenly recollecting himself, "I don't suppose you'd agree with me there. Taste the wine and tell me what you think of it."

Rashleigh, who had by no means relished the tone of this last speech, took Duvet's advice; and, having wiped his mouth, he heaved a sigh half of satisfaction, half of regret to see his empty plate.

"Did you say *fast-day*?" he thought aloud.

"Yes; it was Saturday last night in Findlay's rooms, and now I find out it is Wednesday here! We must have gone a deuce of a long way back. Anything damp left in that jug? Good, then now we'll get to business. You're to be let out to-night, and no more fuss about making you abjure, on condition that you go on foot and get the Holy Father's absolution."

"Willingly," said Rashleigh, who, if he could

honestly have analysed his own inmost thoughts, would have found himself ready to go anywhere away from this place, even though it were to Jericho, for the Grand Turk's absolution.

"And I am to find some other parish or cure for myself. The archbishop's clerk was rather apologetic to me, in private, for being so hard on us two ; he said the archbishop had had a good deal of trouble about these things, and must make an example or two here and there, and the only chance of doing this was with newcomers; for the old lot simply stick together *en bloc*. They practically snap their fingers at him directly his back is turned, and do no penance at all, except where he finds it serious enough to bring his whole power to bear for the expulsion of one of them. So I shall go with you now, and we'll have a pleasant journey together ; you don't know what a jolly place Rome is ! D'ye know, I think there was one propitious moment when I could have got our pilgrimage knocked off, if it had seemed worth while ; but I thought how, after all, the journey would be the pleasantest thing for both of us. No peas in our shoes, you know !" he added, laughing a little immoderately at his own wit. Presently, however, he relapsed into sudden seriousness. "Look here, my dear fellow, why on earth didn't you think of pleading to the Archbishop that you were *not* in Holy Orders ? I was doing all I could to catch your eye and give you a hint."

"Not in Holy Orders . . . Why, you have always admitted to me privately that you believed our Anglican ordination. . . ."

"Oh, of course, of course, I am not one of those who think that your orders are *necessarily* invalid. I have always understood the Pope's decision as allowing such latitude for a charitable hope as to justify me in looking upon you as a fellow-priest. But here, you must observe, we approach the subject from another point of view. Your priesthood, real or supposed, puts you in a cruelly false position, which it is impossible for you to explain to these men. Here, then, the Holy Father's decision comes in like an angel from heaven. You are speaking to men who bow absolutely to the ruling of Rome on all points; therefore you are (from *their* point of view, mind) telling no more than the strict truth in saying that you are not in Holy Orders. Besides, even from your own point of view, is there not sufficient doubt to justify . . . ?"

"Look here, Duvet, suppose we drop this subject now, for I see we are as far as ever from understanding each other." There was very much in Duvet's manner and ways of thought that jarred now upon Rashleigh. Perhaps he did not realise how patronising his own manner had been in the past, and how much tact it had needed on Duvet's part to avoid anything like an open rupture. For all Rashleigh's arguments always rested on the tacit assumption that the Roman Catholics of England are mere intruders on the national Church —interlopers in whose excuse a great deal may be said, but intruders still. The events of last night had necessarily reversed this position. Duvet was the host now in England, and Rashleigh the mere tolerated guest; and with the instinctive consciousness of

this on both sides began the little rift within the lute. Rashleigh was not sorry when Duvet went away with the empty dish and jug, calling out an airy "*Au revoir, my dear fellow; you'll see I shall make it all right for you to-night!*"

"He's already just like the priests one meets in France and Belgium," said Rashleigh to himself, "with their confounded patronising airs and their open sneers when we try to explain our thoroughly Catholic position and our uncompromising hatred of Protestantism."

Duvet came back in half-an-hour's time with another jug and half a loaf of fine bread for Rashleigh. "They're as jolly as sandboys," he said, "over there in the vicar's hall; the Dean is gone, and the fun was getting a little too fast and furious for me. I noticed that our friend Cartwright had got his dagger back, too. The clerk has sent over our parchments, which we have to sign to-morrow. I can't make head or tail of them by this dilapidated lantern."

Rashleigh puzzled for a moment over the crabbed writing, and found reason to regret again that he hadn't learnt more about the Middle Ages before taking a trip thither. Meanwhile a forbidding manservant opened the door and dragged two mattresses into the room, while Duvet deposited in the corner a second jug of wine which he had brought. "I thought I'd share your durance," he explained. "I really don't know that the rushes of the hall floor were any cleaner than these. Good-night, my good man, good-night, and God bless you!" he added, waving his hand

urbanely, as the fellow only stared in bewilderment at what to his ears was unintelligible gibberish. . . . "And now, my dear Rashleigh, have you had the good sense to bring your baccy-pouch with you? . . . That's right, that's right," he went on, waxing the more garrulous in proportion to Rashleigh's gloom. . . . "I meant to remind you when I put up my own pipe, only you gave me so much ado to keep you apart from honest John. . . . A good two ounces, I see; that will last us some time, and then I daresay we shall have to get on without it. . . . Cheer up, old fellow! Fill your own pipe, and we'll take turn and turn with the jug, and make the best of our little excursion into the Middle Ages. We shall be very grateful to the old Colonel, after all. . . . Am I talking nonsense?" he asked, with sudden gravity. Rashleigh made no reply, and the priest applied once more to the Oracle of the Sacred Bottle, after which he burst out into equally sudden and unaccountable laughter.

"My brain reels with trying to think it out—hang it, old man! Care killed a cat. It's a poor heart that never rejoices. Here's to you again, and now for the matches, and don't look so gloomy, my dear fellow."

Rashleigh silently handed the little silver match-box which Agnes had given him in the early days of their engagement. He, too, found that his brain reeled with the attempt to realise his present position. He could only set his teeth and wait resolutely for whatever the future might bring—somewhat gloomily at

first, it must be owned, since he lacked many of Duvet's reasons for optimism, whether spiritual or spirituous. He filled his pipe, however, and took a hearty pull at the flagon ; and the two were presently discussing their proposed journey as eagerly as a pair of modern tourists. They would cross from Harwich to some Flemish port. Rashleigh had more than once managed to slip over that way for a fortnight's holiday in Belgium, and had the pleasantest recollections of the passage. The idea of getting a far longer holiday now, under even freer conditions, appealed strongly to the Bohemian that there is at the bottom of every healthy Englishman ; and he looked forward to seeing real Catholic life among uncontaminated Catholic folk with an interest unspoiled by this unfortunate beginning at Summerleigh, where things were obviously altogether exceptional. As Duvet very justly remarked, nobody ever dreamed that everybody had been equally edifying, or that there had been no black sheep here and there, even in the ages of faith. "And mark me, Rashleigh," he went on, "there's a deal more good than you had the chance of seeing, even in the roughest of them. A very excellent light red wine this—not a headache in a hogshead of it, I'll warrant you. They are really very amusing fellows, those vicars-choral, if one takes them as one finds them. Cartwright told me a story about the Archdeacon. . . ."

The archidiaconal story proved a little too full-flavoured for Rashleigh's taste ; and he announced his intention of going to sleep. Duvet insisted on sitting up to finish his pipe, which, however, had

taken most unaccountably to going out at frequent intervals during the past half-hour. He lit it again for the dozenth time, presented the extinct match with elaborate care to his friend, and threw the little silver box away. He then explained with the most plausible solemnity that he had hit upon this device to see whether Rashleigh had taken too much wine: he was glad to see Rashleigh had *not* taken too much wine—not that it was easy to take too much of that wine, however—for there wasn't a headache in a hick-hogshead of it. When Rashleigh, after an unquiet night, rose with the first rays of the morrow's dawn, he saw his friend sleeping heavily among the rushes, with his spectacles on the bridge of his nose, and the half-smoked pipe firmly clenched in his right hand.

The archiepiscopal injunctions lay by the burnt-out lantern, and Rashleigh began to puzzle at them afresh. Little by little he caught some glimmerings of the sense; but the first fact borne in upon his mind was that there was frequent mention of the port of Kingston-upon-Hull . . . the said port of Kingston-upon-Hull . . . the port of Kingston-upon-Hull aforesaid . . . and no mention at all of Harwich! The Archbishop had evidently exercised his legal option of prescribing to our pilgrims, not only their final goal, but also the port of embarkation; and here was checkmate already to Rashleigh's plan! He had so hoped to revisit on this Romeward journey those dear familiar cities which he loved already for the respite from everyday Protestantism which he had enjoyed under their venerable

walls ! He explained the difficulty to Duvet, who was awake by now, and less blandly optimistic than we saw him last night.

“ Well, it’s very plain,” said Duvet somewhat impatiently : “ the Archbishop writes *Kingston-upon-Hull*—you can’t make it into anything but that.”

“ Yes, but the Archbishop . . .”

“ My dear fellow, a Catholic bishop is a bishop : you musn’t make any mistake about that in our present position,” replied Duvet with some asperity.

“ But I don’t see . . .”

“ No, and it isn’t a case of seeing or not, but of obeying or not : I’m afraid your Anglican ideas mislead you sadly there.”

“ Not at all,” replied Rashleigh hotly : “ it is you Roman Catholics who, with your preconceived notions, have never understood the attitude of Anglican Catholics on this point . . .”

“ Give me a match, my dear fellow, as we aren’t to have any breakfast yet.”

“ And who never will listen . . .”

“ Oh, I’ll listen, now that I have my pipe,” replied his friend with exasperating patronage.

“ I need hardly explain to *you* then, or to any Catholic, that the obedience which a bishop claims by Act of Parliament, or under threat of procedure in a secular court, is null and void to begin with : it would be the merest Erastianism to suffer ourselves to be controlled in spiritual things by a Parliament which is open to Jews, Turks, and infidels. The obedience which we owe then, is moral and spiritual : not in

secular court, but *in foro conscientie*. Consequently we are often forced in conscience to go behind the actual commands of any particular bishop, and appeal to a higher Catholicity behind him, from which alone they can derive any binding force. That is the strength of our position. *Your* bishop tells you to do an unreasonable thing: you are forced to do it, whether you will or no. But *I*, in a similar case, am free. He cannot touch me in the secular court, and in the spiritual court I appeal far away over his head, to Catholic antiquity."

"But who is to judge of Catholic antiquity? You may conceivably be appealing to some supposed ancient custom, or ancient consensus of opinion, which never in fact existed. That's where you find the need of one supreme defining authority, and that's the fatal weakness of your position."

"On the contrary, that's precisely our main strength. I may be wrong as to the fact, of course; but in my *conscience* I am right; and I act according to my conscience, unfettered by erastian shackles on the one hand, or by the un-Catholic decisions of modern bishops on the other. Nobody can dislodge me from my position—except possibly by a harsh exercise of the law which is sure sooner or later to shock our English sense of fair play, and therefore defeats its own end by rendering the aggressor odious. And thus it is that, under God's providence, the priesthood of Great Britain, by their persistent struggle to revive pre-Reformation customs and doctrines, have been the means of bringing even a larger portion of the

episcopate to a more Catholic frame of mind. We lower clergy realise what they too often do not realise—a higher law emanating from their Master and ours, enshrined in the decrees of the earlier councils and popes, and annulling the petty modern ordinances of mere earthworms. For after all, what is a single bishop, in the face of our whole heritage of Catholic doctrine and ceremonies ? ”

“ Except one Bishop,” put in Duvet, in a low and solemn voice.

“ So that, in fact, if at times we seem to disobey them, it is only in order that we may obey them in the higher sense. We humble priests, who see only too plainly the drawn sword of the Angel of God, can we march on to destruction at the bishop’s bidding, as though we were as blind as they to the angelic vision that bars the way ? ”

“ If I understand your metaphor, you are comparing yourself to the . . . to the patient animal which served Balaam . . . ”

“ To a certain extent . . . in short . . . but of course no comparison will bear running to death.”

“ Oh, certainly not: I only mean that one can’t expect to find all asses up to the moral and intellectual standard of Balaam’s; and that God generally chooses other mouthpieces for religious teaching . . . Pardon for my interruption.” The priest began to blow neat rings of smoke again, as if there were no more absorbing interest in the world.

“ Well, take a concrete instance. I presented, as you know, my own boy and girl of six and four at the

Bishop's last confirmation. The Bishop refused to confirm them, although I showed him Hollabone's "Confirmation and Communion of Infants" with Lord Halfwayhouse's preface. Face to face with the evidence, he couldn't deny that the custom seemed both primitive and Catholic—except that, of course, he brought up the usual Protestant cavils as to the proper use of the term *Catholic*. When I demolished those, he simply met me with, 'It has never been permitted in the Anglican Church, and I shall not permit it now.' So I followed the course Lord Halfwayhouse advised. 'You, my lord, set the Holy Ghost at naught by fixing a limit of age to His operations in my children: therefore I am in duty bound to set at naught your vain prohibitions by admitting these two infants, confirmed or unconfirmed, to the incalculable privileges of holy communion.' And there the matter stands at present: for I rest firmly on the bed-rock of antiquity."

"Yes," remarked Duvet blandly, as if he were speaking to his own smoke-rings; "and yet the so-called Reformation, which we both deplore, was carried out under that same plea of antiquity. However, we needn't argue that now, for I feel sure you will soon see for yourself how truly Manning spoke when he condemned the appeal to history as a treason and a heresy. After all, now that I think the matter over, I don't see why we shouldn't go by Harwich, as you are so bent upon it and seem to know that route so well. No doubt the Archbishop would have allowed us that port as well as Hull, if he had realised what

plain reasons there were for it, and, from all I can see, when once we have left Summerleigh, he will be none the wiser, so long as we take care not to stumble into his way again. So there's one question happily settled ; I only wish we could as easily settle the question of breakfast."

## CHAPTER VI

### TRAMPING WITHOUT TEARS

A FORTNIGHT had passed since the events related in our last chapter, and the two wanderers were no longer far from Harwich. They had tramped, by easy stages, halfway across England, enjoying in their own country all the fresh delights of a tour abroad. A great part of the way had been familiar to both of them under its modern aspect, and they found a never-failing pleasure in wandering through the fens and forests that obscured so many well-known spots. They had turned aside for a few miles to see the somewhat squalid manufacturing village of the Midlands, without any of the redeeming advantages of a real town, in which Rashleigh had passed his boyhood. Here they found a delicious hamlet of a dozen houses and a half a dozen outlying farms, embosomed in thick groves of oak and ash, and mirrored in a crystal stream. It is true, they found the church, now one of the glories of England, in a shameful state of disrepair ; here, as at Summerleigh, beasts trod down the grass in the churchyard, and a medieval Parson Trulliber had used the church itself partly as a barn, partly as a brewhouse. Moreover, this was only one out of many

disillusions. Very many of the parish priests whose hospitality they enjoyed on the way, proved to be as lax in their conception of clerical celibacy as Cartwright and Bull themselves. In an equally large proportion of cases, the rector was either a mere boy still at the University, or had obtained leave of non-residence to dance attendance upon some great man elsewhere, leaving the actual cure of souls to the tender mercies of a meagre hireling at ten marks a year. The state of the churches, of their furniture, and of the books was frequently such as to shock all our tourists' ideas of decorum ; windows often unglazed or broken, walls that threatened ruin and roofs that let the rain in ; service books torn or wanting, even the pyx itself sometimes wanting altogether, and often sordid or lacking that lock upon which the bishops always insisted as a safeguard against theft for purposes of witchcraft or seduction. Here and there moreover, they had worse disappointments still. They had intended to say Mass daily, like good and proper priests, and, on Rashleigh's expressing some diffidence as to how he could manage this, Duvet volunteered to show him the way. The Archbishop's letters (in which nothing was said of suspension) were credentials sufficient to persuade the first parish priest whom they asked to allow Duvet to officiate for him, but the result was disastrous. While Duvet's elaborate Roman genuflexions scandalised a congregation accustomed to the simpler English medieval use, he himself, on the other hand, went hopelessly astray among the tattered volumes, which together did service for the

Missal. He was compelled at last to plunge despairing into the page that lay open before him, where he presently found himself reciting that lesson—long since bowdlerised away by the Roman authorities—in which the medieval breviary recounted, to the honour of Pope Leo, his condemnation of Pope Honorius for heresy. However, not a soul in the church understood him, and, even if they had understood, it is probable that nobody but Rashleigh would have been particularly shocked to hear that a pope here and there had been condemned for heresy. On the whole, even the most unexpected of their experiences rather amused than scandalised Rashleigh. It was not only that his companion could always explain away each incident quite plausibly by quotation's from Newman's lectures, for in many cases Rashleigh did not even listen to Father Duvet, but let his thoughts wander at will. The fact is, that this midsummer vagabondage appealed strongly to the elemental savage within him. He felt as we feel on our Continental holidays, where the crowded market, the quaint dresses and uncouth speech, the very squalor and unhealthiness of those picturesque old-world streets, seem to exist simply for our amusement ; simply as actors and scenery in a theatre for which we have bought tickets in the front stalls. Which of us, when *Othello* is played, distresses himself seriously about the morals of Iago ? Behind all this was the keen physical exhilaration of a foot-tour, after a long period of routine work, in this perfect summer weather ; the charm of this scenery that changed hourly from meadow to cornland, from

cornland to forest; the plain but abundant fare, for, even where the parson proved churlish, there was always the farmer's wife ready to regale our clerical pilgrims with milk and butter and eggs and home-brewed beer; the healthy life that began daily with the dawn, and took its sleep with the birds and beasts when the last red had faded out of the evening sky. He scarcely missed even his wife and children, except to wish them by his side at the moments when his enjoyment was keenest, and to promise himself the pleasure of relating these things soon at his own table. As to scruples of conscience, he cast them far behind him, to lie undisturbed till he should fall at the Holy Father's feet and be absolved from all. For sentiment is your one mighty worker of miracles, and this Bohemian holiday had now wrought in Rashleigh what the strawberries and ice, the love of plain-song and the hatred of Gounod, the pleasure of scandalising High Church friends and rising superior to the Prayer-book, had done for his friend Wilde. He considered himself already practically in communion with the See of Peter. The one material evil that might have seriously troubled this rosy view of the medieval world had hitherto been conspicuously absent. Everywhere they had heard of highway robbers and cut-throats, but had never met with any trace of these men, who still seemed as mythical to them as to the modern Italian traveller. What with their pilgrims' passport, and what with the untroubled summer weather, they had found their journey so easy as to convince them that the material discomforts of the

Middle Ages have been grossly exaggerated by prejudiced Protestant writers. The houses, it is true, were far from modern ideas of cleanliness, but our friends could nearly always find a bed in the hay of the barn. The morning tub was altogether lacking, but there was always some clear stream at hand to swim in. Of course, there had been rough experiences here and there, but these had always been such as, to men full of animal spirits and started on a brief holiday, only heightened the pleasant sense of novelty and contrast, just as already they had laughed a hundred times over the ludicrous scenes at Summerleigh. A similar adventure had come about in the good town of Bury St. Edmunds. As they passed through the motley crowds that thronged the narrow streets, it had moved Rashleigh's pity deeply to see so many deluded pilgrims worshipping at what *he* knew to be an empty shrine. For he had read Father Mackinlay's book, and had found it as convincing as, during the past year or two, all Roman reasoning had seemed to him. He saw no real difficulty in the fact that the monks of Bury had always, up to the very Reformation, encouraged the belief that they still possessed the bones of St. Edmund, for, as Dom Mackinlay argues, Louis VIII *might* (in spite of the silence of chroniclers) have been at Bury when he invaded England; *might* have stolen the bones with the deepest secrecy, and *might* have recommended equal secrecy, for the next two hundred and fifty years, to the triumphant clergy of Toulouse, to whom he *might* have given the precious relics. After those two

hundred and fifty years were passed, the Toulousans did undoubtedly boast the bones of "St. Aymund, an English king's confessor," which, for all Catholic purposes, are plainly to be identified with those of St. Edmund, English king and martyr. As to the difficulty that St. Edmund's body was incorrupt, whereas the Aymund bones, when inspected at Toulouse, were found in the ordinary state of unsanctified corruption, that melancholy change can easily be explained (as Romanist advocates very reasonably argue) by the subtle and poisonous effects of the Reformation. All this had been put with striking force by Father Duvet, and had commended itself to Rashleigh, who had already swallowed even more baseless theories from the same source. Moreover, to doubt of the Toulouse relics seemed equivalent to assuming that the whole Catholic world had gone mad. If the whole story was as baseless as mere Protestants had argued, was it credible that the Pope should have accepted it, should have used his immense authority to procure the relics for the new Cathedral of Westminster, and should have rewarded the complaisance of the *curé* of St. Sernin with the title of Monsignor? That a shrewd man of business like the Duke of Norfolk should have lent himself enthusiastically to the project? That Cardinal Vaughan and the whole Roman hierarchy in England should have raised such triumphant paeans at the bringing of the bones to Arundel, in anticipation of their final removal to Westminster? That Father This and Abbot That, and all the Romanist historians who are credited by

ritualists with so profound a knowledge of medieval history, should have lent at least the weight of their silence to support the impassioned arguments of Dom Mackinlay ? The mere supposition was absurd and insulting, and Rashleigh's mind was soon made up ; he had never troubled to look at the later correspondence in the *Times*, nor had Father Duvet thought fit to allude to it. Moreover, scarcely three weeks ago, Rashleigh found himself at Arundel, had seen with his own eyes the shrine in which the blessed bones were laid, and had bought at the church door a Catholic Truth Society pamphlet describing the whole story in that style of pious supposition which so often does duty for historical writing among Romanist writers. He had felt, therefore, no shadow of doubt that, at this present moment, the holy relics were no longer at Bury, but at Toulouse, and that the poor deluded folk were worshipping here at an empty shrine. Now, Rashleigh was one of those impulsive people with whom a conviction is apt to find prompt expression in word or act ; nor was he as yet a sufficiently educated Catholic to realise that nobody is in the least bound to believe in any particular relics, from which it would seem to follow that there is not the least harm in worshipping St. Aymund by mistake for St. Edmund, not even so much as would make it worth your while to undeceive the common people, when you have learnt the truth yourself. On the contrary, it seemed to Rashleigh that here for once he might use his privilege of modern knowledge to disabuse the poor ignorant folk of Bury, and abolish a custom so displeasing to

God as the bowing down of multitudes daily before a mere mass of marble and gold and jewels. In spite, therefore, of Duvet's emphatic nods and winks, Rashleigh proceeded at once, on arriving at the shrine, to enlighten its guardians and the general public as to the true historical facts. They seemed to take it at first as a bad joke ; and Duvet succeeded in passing to his friend a slip of paper in which he had written, "Hold your tongue ; Cardinal Vaughan gave them up long ago." Rashleigh's mind, however, was not so nimble in its operations as Duvet's, and he simply looked up and asked "Gave what up ?"

"The bones—the Toulouse and Arundel bones." Duvet spoke very rapidly in a very low voice, and turned away as if he were examining with special interest the artistic marvels of the shrine.

"Why on earth didn't you tell me, then ?" But his friend was already too deeply interested to hear him.

"Friends," continued Rashleigh to his audience ; while Duvet, with a startled glance and a gesture of violent disapproval, sidled towards the cloister door ; "Friends, I am bound to modify my statement." They looked blankly at the man who addressed them so fluently in such unintelligible gibberish, and yet so like in some ways to their mother English. Rashleigh made a violent effort to express himself in Anglo-Saxon. "My tongue has outrun my wit, friends ; I should have said, not that the blessed bones of St. Edmund were *certainly* taken hence by King Louis VIII. of France some hundred years since, but that they may *in all*

*likelihood* so have been stolen, and taken to the city of Toulouse, in France, where men now worship them. Wherefore, seeing that this shrine of yours may so well prove to be empty of holy relics, and your worship therefore unpleasing to God. . . ." By this time the monk in charge had realised that Rashleigh was talking seriously, and the discussion began in earnest. It was not of long duration. Rashleigh, fortunately for himself, had chosen a moment when there were only two or three worshippers at the shrine beyond the professional guardians ; and now, seeing one murderous-looking penitent draw from his sleeve a two-edged *misericorde*, or dagger, twelve inches long, while two sturdy cripples hobbled towards him with their heavy crutches uplifted, he slipped hastily out by a side door, caught up his friend (who had taken fifty yards' start) about the end of the cloister, and the two rushed out of the great Norman gate just as the porter, roused by the hue and cry, tumbled out of his lodge one moment too late to close the wicket in their face. Fortunately for our friends, the monks and the townspeople of Bury had for a couple of generations been at even bitterer feud than usual. Only a few years ago the citizens had stormed the abbey, which they looked upon as a very bastile of oppression ; and the monks, with the king's justice at their back, had exacted terrible vengeance for this deed of violence. Any enemy of the abbey was therefore rather a popular character at this moment in Bury town ; and the citizens carefully abstained from officious interference as our friends scuttled down the

street and gained the open road. Here, after they had run fifty yards or so, Rashleigh thought he might safely pause and look round; but he turned and fled again on perceiving the elder of the two guardians of the shrine, who had issued from a postern in the abbey walls, and was now selecting a smooth round pebble from the brook, the size of a moderate hen's egg, which he fitted into the end of a cleft stick. Poor Rashleigh's flight was not so swift but that this missile, launched with a skill evidently bred of lifelong use, caught him low in the back, staggering him for a moment with its impact, but adding very considerably to his speed when he got under way again. Duvet meanwhile had sped on without pause, which was very prudent and fortunate. For, when once the citizens had learnt the true heinousness of this slur cast on St. Edmund's bones, upon which most of them depended for their livelihood as definitely as the Ephesians depended on Diana, they too swarmed out of the gate like bees; and Duvet, who was now again in the rear, was horrified to see an arrow quiver in the ground at his side. But the two fugitives had now reached the crown of a little rise in the road; a few more yards downhill brought them to a wood, into which they plunged sideways; and soon the voices of their pursuers died away behind them.

For all this, Duvet sped on until exhausted nature could do no more; and his first word, when he could speak at all, was to reproach Rashleigh with his mad folly.

“What!” panted Rashleigh. “Would you have

them go on worshipping false or non-existent relics?"

"My dear Rashleigh, didn't you understand that note I passed you? St. Edmund's body *is* at Bury, and not at Toulouse; Cardinal Vaughan acknowledged that publicly long ago at the Catholic Truth Society Conference, and then it transpired that all our best historians had known it all along, and had only held their tongues on the proper Catholic principle of economy of truth."

"And on what principle did you hold your tongue about all this to me?"

"I . . . why, I supposed you knew of it. The *Times* was full of it, all the papers were full of it; you can imagine what a howl of irreverence and unseemly jeers they set up at what they called the Romanist recantation."

"My dear Duvet, isn't that economy of truth rather penny-wise and pound-foolish? But I think you must have been mistaken; for, when I looked in at Arundel only a few weeks ago, the verger had no doubt about St. Edmund's body, and he sold me a penny pamphlet describing his transportation to Toulouse. Is that possible, if Cardinal Vaughan had long ago given up the theory of their authenticity?"

"I don't know what's possible," replied Duvet sulkily; "I only know what I heard at the Catholic Truth Conference with my own ears. The Cardinal thanked Sir Ernest Clarke for exploding the myth, and showed how the mistake was not at all an awkward matter for the Church, since she pretended to no

divine guidance to certainty in such matters as relics. Of course, every Catholic knows that one may accept or reject them as one pleases."

"When you say 'every Catholic knows,' are you talking of the twentieth or the fourteenth century?" There was a touch of bitter irony in Rashleigh's tone; he had not yet accustomed himself to certain subtleties of his new faith.

"Oh, the common people are pretty much the same everywhere, as Newman says; and you mustn't go to them for a model of Catholicity."

"And the monks?"

"Oh, the monks and priests often share the prejudices of the common folk; the Church never pretends to such absolute divine guidance as to exempt her from the operation of such-like natural laws. A certain amount of *savoir faire* is necessary everywhere; when we meet rough and prejudiced people, we must respect their prejudices, or suffer for it. I have not the least doubt that any real theological scholar here in the Middle Ages would tell you exactly what Cardinal Vaughan told us."

"Perhaps, perhaps," answered Rashleigh, doubtfully. "But I don't think your modern theological scholar would be so ready with his dagger as that pimple-faced ruffian in the church, or so handy with the stone and the split stick as that burly monk. I must teach my little boy that trick when we get back again. I verily thought he had stove in my back! Well, I suppose we must be grateful to him after all; for he's effectually warned us off trying to argue with common folk about relics."

"Who speaketh of common folk and relics?" broke in a voice behind them, which made them both start to their feet in something like panic fear.

"Common folk and relics," echoed Duvet, with a readiness which did all possible credit to his presence of mind. "We spake of no such thing, reverend sir; your ears have doubtless played you false."

"I commend your prudence, young sir," replied the stranger, a grey old priest; "but you need have no fear with me, who have no love for the religion of the common folk, nor over-much belief in those relics which they choose for special honour and worship. I see by your garb that we are all three priests; and, since indeed I heard more of your talk than ye readily believe, I tell you once more that ye need hide nought from me, who have seen much of man's wickedness during the three-score years and ten which God hath allotted to me in these truly accursed times."

"Holy father," replied Rashleigh, "we spake even of this matter, whether he who knows certain relics to be false may yet leave the common people to worship them as true."

"I will relate," replied the old man, "that which befell mine own self one short year agone. But first learn that I am that Thomas Bramston who, under God's grace to me a miserable sinner, professed sacred theology with no small honour of man for twenty years at the University of Cambridge; until, weary of the disputes of the schools, I withdrew to a cure of souls in this small village. Cure of souls? nay, rather, cure of devils—uncouth, barbarous, haters of the light,

robbers of God's tithes"—and here the old man's shrunken face flushed dark red, and the veins stood out on his forehead.

"Have patience, father," pleaded Rashleigh, laying his hand on that of the stranger, who reminded him strangely of his own father. "Remember that even Christ pleased not Himself, but endured great contradiction of sinners against Himself."

"Ay, ye have read St. Paul's Epistles?" asked the old man with some surprise. "And ye have read in St. Peter's Second Epistle how in the last days men shall arise railing in matters whereof they are ignorant, enticing unsteadfast souls, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved. Verily ours are these last days whereof he spake—the days wherein iniquity hath increased—but God shall suddenly make an end, for His last judgment is at hand, and though men feast and are drunken as in the days of Noah—Nay, suffer me a space, young brother, and I will return to my tale. Know, then, that a most famous abbey of these parts had sent men through the land, as is their custom, to show their reliques to the faithful and collect from their offerings gold to repair the late sad ruin of their church by fire. In my presence the preacher brought forth a small casket, which he extolled as containing some of that very bread which our Lord had pressed with His own human teeth upon earth; and, marking some lack of belief in his hearers, 'Lo here,' quoth he, 'this reverend scholar, who hath won such fame among all other professors of divine science at our most renowned University of

Cambridge ; behold, if ye lewd folk doubt, this learned man will rise up, if need be, to bear witness that I speak truth.' Whereat, I avow, I blushed, and had it not been that others were present in whose behoof he spake rather than in his own—men to whom I owed reverence—then should I doubtless have exposed the lie. But what can one man do, when not even our monks or our clergy abstain from their chase after filthy lucre—nay, rather defend these their vain imaginings by heretical reasonings concerning our very faith, as with mine own ears I have heard ! As the wise Boethius saith, ' men might well call me a madman if I reasoned with such madmen as these.'"

" Yet these were, or should have been, men learned in their own religion," put in Rashleigh.

" Ay, say *should have been*, young man ; say not *were*. I have taught at Cambridge, and I know the lives of these men, and the darkness of that ignorance which knoweth not its own folly. Thou, too, hast doubtless seen somewhat thereof, and knowest how many of them comprehend not even the words of those holy offices which in the church they mumble and mutilate with their lips ! And as for the common folk, verily, as Holy Scripture saith of the Samaritans, each hath fashioned a God of his own. For, grudging the honour paid to the greater saints, they (as it is ever proper to the baser sort to be envious) must needs claim each for himself a share of some mock saintling, so that each town— what say I ?—each peddling hamlet must invent a patron and relics of its own ; or at least must fabricate, with impious piety, brand-new

and lying legends for those saints whose worship is lost in the darkness of ancient times ! Yet how can a man worship that which he knoweth not, even though the thing itself be holy, without grievous peril to religion and Holy Church ? Would to God, indeed, that such relics were even holy, or even of matters indifferent. I myself have seen the bones of a base country boor worshipped on the altar of the most High God—what do I say, of a boor ?—nay, worse still, of a certain Abbot Pyro, concerning whom, when I had studied in the life of St. Samson, I found this to be the one note of his sanctity : that, being drunken with wine, he had fallen into a well, and so died in his sins ! But so many of these things have been done under my very eyes as time would fail me to tell of, by men who, supposing gain to be godliness, sell profane bones as the relics of God's saints ! Meanwhile old wives and base wenches chant daily at their work the lewd tales of fabled saints, while the clergy hold their peace ; or if one bolder than the rest should rebuke them, he must do it at the risk of his life and limb. But that is one of the burdens of this iniquitous generation, until God shall come and make a clean sweep of all."

" God's patience is long," put in Duvet, who was less moved by the old man's vehemence than amused to think that this world which seems so full of life in the twentieth century should, in the fourteenth, have appeared to be in the very last stage of senile decay. " God's patience is long, and the world may last centuries yet."

"There speak the vain fancies of rash youth," sighed the old man; "but I have lived . . . I have lived . . . threescore years and twelve. Long and weary have been the days of my pilgrimage, and much evil have I seen upon the earth, and much have I read of the evils of past times; almost as intolerable, if that were possible, as our own. Not a hundred years have passed since the great friar, Roger Bacon, saw no hope for the world but in some good pope shortly to come: and what popes have we had since then? Boniface VIII., Clement V., men not worthy to untie the shoe-strings of the popes whom Bacon saw, and weighed, and found wanting. . . . And now . . . Nay, nay, young brother, it is my one solace, as I mark the field growing thicker and thicker with tares, to think that within a brief space—perchance even before these grey hairs have gone down to the grave—Christ will come in glory to break the wicked like a potter's vessel, and to reign with His saints for ever and ever."

There was an indescribable pathos in the old man's earnestness, to those listeners who knew the plain prose of his impatient dream; and, for the only time since those first few minutes of disappointment in Summerleigh Minster, Rashleigh began to suspect, uneasily, a deeper moral squalor beneath the surface of the merely picturesque dirt and dilapidation to which he and Duvet had hitherto confined their attention—just as some chance sight may compel the tourist for once to look deeper into the life of a townsfolk, where hitherto he has simply looked upon

their tumble-down houses as existing for the sake of picturesqueness and amusement.

There was a silence, after which the old man invited them to his house, and gave them such hospitality as he could afford. They learned many strange things that night, and went on their way next morning with an uncomfortable knowledge that the spirit of this fourteenth-century world might appear very sordid indeed to an intellectual man who was seriously trying to do his duty in it, and not merely tramping through it as a tourist.

But the sun was bright, the birds and the flowers gay; the optimism of youth and health and freedom asserted itself again; and, as they skirted the marshy flats a dozen miles or so from Harwich, the world seemed again as beautiful as ever. It was a glorious evening; the level sun slanted through red fir-stems and fell across their road, resting at last upon a white-walled, reed-thatched cottage beside a bend of the river, just weather-worn enough to be at its most picturesque stage.

“What a perfect picture!” cried Rashleigh; “let us stop and drink it in at our leisure.”

“We must get on to some village,” replied Duvet, to whom supper was always a sacred time.

“No, no, let’s ask for a bed and a crust of bread here. And besides that, I want to talk to you: sit down on this log here. Some good angel has brought us face to face with this scene to answer all my doubts. This morning I was seriously unhappy, and even distrustful of the goodness of God.”

"The old parson has upset you?"

"Yes, the old parson. God's fresh sunrise dispelled a good deal of that melancholy long ago; but every now and then during the day . . . Now, however, I see clearly that all that was a mere temptation of the devil, and this scene seems—I can't express one-tenth of what I see in it, but I will try."

"I think I know what you mean," replied Duvet, without enthusiasm.

"Well, let me try. What is it, to begin with, that we see in this scene, and which we could never have seen in our twentieth-century England? First of all, there is the deep unspeakable peace of it all. The very reflection of the white walls seems to sleep more tranquilly on the quiet stream than anything I have ever found before. And the little house itself is such perfection of rural beauty—almost rude, I might have called it in other days—divine simplicity is the only word I can find for it now."

"Exactly."

"One feels as one feels about our noble cathedrals: the men who built this house and who haunted it in their lifetime, had something which is lacking to us. On the edge of a virgin forest, standing almost like a hermitage in the wilderness (for we have not met a single soul since noon along all this woodland way)—look at this harmony in white and grey and fresh green, with God's pure blue sky above, and just enough warmth from the setting sun to kindle it into life and to remind us that at this very moment, perchance, every soul in that simple cottage is kneeling before the

image of the Blessed Virgin, while their evening sacrifice rises straight to God through an air undefiled by factory-smoke. I tell you, I have never yet felt so deeply how nature, subdued yet undefiled by man, speaks to us of God. Here we are in His own cathedral, rich with the incense of these prayers that rise up from every town and hamlet and secluded farmstead throughout the land : and when I think how, a year or two ago, I might have thought myself happy to kneel at this sacred moment of sundown in some dingy London church copied from Westminster Abbey by Pearson, before an over-painted, over-gilded reredos of florid Perpendicular by Bodley—a glut of architectural ornament, but in our hearts spiritual barrenness and separation from the True Vine—while here the simple open-air *Angelus*—by the way, Duvet, how is it we have never seen anyone saying their *Angelus* in the fields during all these weeks ?”

“ I suppose it isn’t yet inven—that is, perhaps Holy Church may not yet have ordained it.”

“ Well, here is nature’s *Angelus*. Let us say ours here.” . . . When they moved on again, Rashleigh put his arm in Duvet’s, and tears stood in his honest grey eyes. “ There are moods of mere sentiment,” he murmured, “ that teach diviner truths than all the arguments of history. If only I could have my dear ones with me now, for two or three short hours, to come and eat their simple pottage here with us, and then sit talking with the honest village folk on the bench outside the door, while my bairns tumbled about on the turf with theirs ! ”

"I have been thinking," put in Duvet, who had been just a little bored by the length and intensity of Rashleigh's raptures, "that it's queer we don't see anybody about."

"So did I for one moment: but, while we were saying the *Angelus*, I felt sure I saw the head of a man just on the other side of that rough fence. Only—you will laugh at my idea—I could have sworn he wore a regular London chimney-pot. For one second he seemed to look at us. I said '*Retro Sathanas!*' and in a moment he was gone. It was a ghost of our past life, reminding us to make the most of this short pilgrimage to the Holy City. No wonder that good and evil spirits are more visible to men's eyes in these days of diviner simplicity!"

By this time they had approached the cottage, which looked somewhat less peaceful at a front view and from a few yards off. The wet turf all round the door was trampled into a quagmire by the feet of cattle and men; the door stood half open, staggering on a single hinge; blank closed shutters on one side, with a staring open window on the other, gave a leering and debouched look to the white front. And, as the spirit of sentiment is apt to blow whither it listeth, Rashleigh now felt, in spite of himself, as if an air of sin and death breathed round this spot which, a few minutes before, had seemed an earthly paradise. The travellers' knock at the door, timidly repeated and repeated, woke only a dismal echo from the forest, and Rashleigh, reading on Duvet's face the same gruesome forebodings as on his own, pulled himself together with an effort, and walked

into the single room which formed almost the whole of a medieval dwelling. When his eyes had grown accustomed to the dim light, he found the whole earthen floor of the hovel littered in the wildest confusion. The family chest, with its lid awry like the door, lay on its side in the middle of the hall, half across the black ashes that marked where the fire-place had been. Torn and squalid clothing lay scattered about; and Rashleigh, mechanically picking up one of these poor rags, felt something half-slimy, half-sticky, which sickened him with nameless disgust. At the same moment Duvet gripped his arm, and pointed with trembling finger to where, on the opposite wall, the dim light from the door fell on the print of a child's hand, stamped in blood upon the plaster by some devil drunk with murder. It was evident that the whole place was a reeking shambles. Rashleigh never quite knew how he got out: the next thing he remembered, long afterwards, was sitting by the river in the dusk, and washing from his fingers a clot of blood to which a few long grey hairs still clung.

"It's what the parson told us of last night," whispered Duvet to him in a hoarse voice.

"It's all the devils of hell!" answered Rashleigh. "For God's sake, let's get away from this infernal place."

They tramped along that road the whole night through, starting at their own shadows in an open space, and quickening their jaded pace at the least rustling in the forest. Once they could have sworn that they saw a man moving stealthily before them,

but he vanished in a moment among the trees. Yet even their ghastly fears availed but little to spur on their outworn bodies, and midnight found them still in the forest. The moon set now, and Duvet found the less reason to stumble onwards; so he presently threw himself on the ground and announced his intention of going no further without a rest. This was impossible by the roadside: but Rashleigh looked about and presently found a little hollow, thick with undergrowth of bracken, into which they sank down, and were soon fast asleep.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SICKNESS OF HOPE

RASHLEIGH woke first at daybreak, very fresh and very hungry ; he roused Duvet, and the two trudged onward. Half a mile's walk brought them out of the forest to the open flats by the river, where they took their morning swim and came out deliciously refreshed, but even more ravenous than before. Already, as they tramped briskly along the road in this pure sunshine, the events of last night seemed only a half-forgotten nightmare. But neither Rashleigh nor Duvet referred to those events ; they walked on in unwonted silence, each wrapt in his own thoughts. Suddenly Rashleigh darted forward and picked up a glove that lay by the wayside—a pale mouse-coloured kid glove, with dark ribbing, for all the world like a gentleman's glove from Bond Street. Duvet caught his breath at the sight of it, and came hurriedly nearer ; while Rashleigh, with trembling fingers, turned the palm inside out. There, plain enough, was the stamp of a fashionable London maker ! Duvet clutched his arm. “ Do you know,” said he, “ my spirit told me when I woke this morning. Thank God ! I mean . . . that is . . . of course you are impatient, as I am, to tell our

friends of our wonderful experience in this strange vision."

"It really seems," answered Rashleigh, very slowly, and with a tremor in his voice which he did all he could to control; "it really seems as if we must have woken up again! And . . . and . . . it really must be so; as you say, we ought to be *very* thankful for all we shall be privileged to tell. Now that it is all over, what a delightful time we see it has been!"

"Oh, delicious!"

"The freshness, the simplicity of it all!"

"And the true patriarchal faith!"

"And sterling genuineness of the people, under their rough outside!"

"Ah, that was indeed Merrie England, the England of the Middle Ages! But now it is all over; we must go back to the work-a-day world!" Duvet heaved a sigh, which, if he had only been a play-actor, might have earned him a grave in Westminster Abbey.

Neither looked at the other as they exchanged these exclamations of rapture; and each thought in his inmost heart that the other protested a little too much. I am sure you are intelligent and observant, dear reader; so you must frequently have heard two ladies outbidding each other in praise of a third whom neither dares openly to abuse in the presence of the other. So our two friends vied with each other in praise of the good old times, while with one accord they instinctively quickened and quickened their pace to get back into the open day of modern civilisation.

"If we aren't farther from Harwich than I think,

we shall be there in time for the boat train," said Rashleigh eagerly. "That will take us to London by half-past seven."

"Need we be in such a hurry? Couldn't we go to a hotel first and get some breakfast?"

"Oh, blow breakfast! And then we can catch the 9.15 from St. Pancras, and be at Summerleigh by lunch time."

"But how can we travel in this outlandish dress?"

"Hang the dress, I tell you. . . Why, at the very worst, they'll only take us for expelled French Religious, and treat us with the same half-contemptuous kindness."

"Yes," replied Duvet; but presently he added in a tone of some anxiety: "Won't you stop first at the Oratory, and see your friend Cyril Wilde?"

"No, not this time. It isn't that I've the least thought of changing my mind, old man, only you don't *know* how I want to get home again now! I didn't know it myself, till I found five minutes ago that it was in my power. Heaven knows what may have happened there all this time! As we were walking along just now, I was thinking all the while of what we saw last night . . . but that's six centuries behind us now, thank God! Only the sweet savour of faith will remain in our hearts. . . I say, won't it be ripping to tell all our friends!"

Here a sudden turn of the road brought fresh and more definite evidence. Not a hundred yards ahead of them was another unmistakably modern figure, walking almost as fast as themselves. He wore a

rather battered chimney-pot hat, a frock coat of the most fashionable cut, but very much the worse for wear, and what had apparently at one time been lavender trousers. He was evidently a tramp of the semi-professional class, a broken-down photographer or watchmaker perhaps; but there could be no doubt of his modernity, and Rashleigh could have rushed after him and hugged him to his bosom. "Sir!" he called out politely. The figure turned half-round, but without stopping—nay, rather increasing its pace after the first hasty glance.

"Sir!" cried Rashleigh again. The figure seemed unwilling to break into an actual run, yet determined to put on all possible speed short of that.

"Sir!" cried Rashleigh for the third time, starting to run himself and calling as he ran, "I only . . ."

At this the gentleman in the shabby-genteel clothes turned round; and, pretending to have heard now for the first time, even took a step or two to meet Rashleigh, and held out his hand with well-simulated cordiality. "By my halidame," he began, in a finicking London voice, and with exaggerated *bonhomie*. "By my halidame, masters, well met! What cheer, my bantocks, what cheer?" Here was such proof positive as we get sometimes abroad, when we suspect a stranger to be English by his appearance, and are assured of it the moment he addresses us in French. Moreover, the face and voice were both well known to Rashleigh, who glanced one moment at the stranger's waistcoat, and there saw further proof, if proof had been needed.

"Have I not," he asked, "the honour of addressing Lord Halfwayhouse, President of the Anglican Catholic Society? And is not this your lordship's glove?"

"That is my name," said the stranger, after a moment's hesitation. "Provided," he added, "that I am indeed the man I thought I was ten days ago."

"Then I am doubly glad to see your lordship, for I know now that we are in the twentieth century again."

"If *that* is all your proof," answered the peer dejectedly, "I fear I can give you but cold comfort. Ten days ago I should have doubted the sanity of any man who addressed me as you do now; but to-day I seem to understand; and, unless I am happily mistaken, you are companions in misfortune with myself. . . Yet it is something even to have gained two companions in misfortune."

"Thank you, my lord," replied Rashleigh, in a tone in which one grain of gratitude struggled feebly with ninety-nine grains of disappointment. "But do I understand you aright . . . ?"

"Do I understand myself?" broke in the other impatiently. "If I dared say what seems to me the truth, and yet at the same time too incredible to be true, I should tell you how, just ten days ago, unless my reckoning has failed me, I received a letter from a pious member of one of our sisterhoods who has lately joined the Roman schism. It bore the stamp of Summerleigh, in the Midlands. The writer, evidently with the most charitable intentions, informed me that she had caused a novena of masses to be sung in order

that I might be vouchsafed a vision into the true essence of Catholicism, as it was before the Deformation. My chaplain, a very excellent young man, who has lately—but that is another matter—my chaplain, I say, asked me whether I would really wish to go back to the Middle Ages if I could. I was a little impatient that morning, I own it. We may have become heated in discussion. There are certain things which grate unspeakably at times upon all finely strung nerves like mine; and then perhaps a discussion arises in which each goes farther than he had originally intended. I said—and indeed I did feel it at the moment—I said that I thought no age so despicable as our own. Mr. Addlestrop Smalley, who had also heard mass at St. Fadric's, and was walking home-wards with us, hastened to express himself even more strongly; and we ended by calling heaven to witness that, if the change were possible, we would go back at that moment to the Middle Ages. Hardly had the words left our mouths, when I found myself . . . here!" He looked round as he spoke with an air of utter desolation, a shrug of the shoulders, and a movement of his outstretched palms which would have seemed indescribably comic to Rashleigh at any moment of less bitter disappointment. It was necessary, however, to say something. "You are going to Harwich?" he asked at last.

"I don't know where I am going to!" and the peer repeated the same despairing gesture. "I am positively drifting about my native country like a tramp!"

"I can't believe it's true," replied Rashleigh,

answering his own thoughts, and striding on quicker than ever. "And, come what may, I mean to be in Harwich by six o'clock, and catch the boat-train."

Duvet put his finger to his lips, and dropped behind with Lord Halfwayhouse, who at once began entertaining him with an account of his adventures. He and Mr. Smalley had not been fortunate enough to find medieval clothes to creep into at his transformation ; on the contrary, the change had taken place in broad daylight, in the streets of London ; and, but for a friendly friar who had protected them as strangers from a far-off country, the populace would have stoned them out of hand. "The friar asked me where we came from ; and, heaven forgive me, I told him China. What was my horror when he replied that he had been there too, with Marco Polo ! But the next moment relieved me, for he professed to have recognised my costume at once, and began to explain to the bystanders how none but great barons in China wear tight trousers and a long black coat ; and how my silk hat—Mr. Smalley had a panama and a Norfolk jacket—was a sign that I must be some near kinsman of the Emperor's. That set me at my ease, and I answered out of my head all the questions that they put me, for, of course, at a conjuncture like this, self-preservation is our one paramount duty. But still, whatever I answered, the good old friar nodded his head and said, 'True, true, I have seen that with mine own sinful eyes !' and then capped my story with some more astounding fiction of his own. I think he must have told his

Chinese stories so long that he really believed he had been there. But he saved my life, that's certain ; and charity covereth a multitude of sins. When the people found I was a kinsman of the great Khan's, nothing was too good for me. The Lord Mayor took me into his house. The King sent for me to Westminster, where (as I may aver without undue vanity) I created a veritable sensation. When they asked me to describe China, I told them about modern England—railways, telegraphs, and other petty triumphs of our materialistic civilisation—the only difficulty was to tone them down enough to persuade the people of their truth ! But put not thy trust in princes ! My first misfortune was, that I gave the King my watch as a present. This brought me into high favour for a moment ; but next day I found my lord of Canterbury had persuaded his Majesty to let it soak for seven hours in holy water. Of course it stopped hopelessly, and that naturally proved that his grace's worst suspicions were true. Finally, the Archbishop confiscated it for religious purposes ; and next day a report was already abroad that, on opening the casket in which he had locked it, he had found nothing but a venomous toad ; which again had changed under his eyes to a bat, and flown out of the window. The day after, the common talk was that I had attempted to poison the King by putting a toad in his goblet ; only the Archbishop had made the sign of the cross over it, and the venomous beast had flown out in the likeness of a winged dragon. I could see that the King himself began to believe in this toad. But what ruined me

was a clumsy inadvertence of my own. I always felt great compassion for this poor King Edward II. . . .”

“ What, we are under Edward II., are we ? ”

The learned peer looked the priest gravely from tip to toe. “ Edward II., 1307 to 1327,” he replied, in a tone of great dignity and condescension. “ Of course I knew, as every educated man knows, that this poor monarch *was*—or rather, we must now say, *would* be—shamefully murdered within the course of this very year 1327. In an imprudent moment I let this slip from me in private conversation. A friend warned me just in time. I slipped off to the Lord Mayor again ; and, luckily for me, within a few hours the well-known revolt broke out in London. By the greatest good fortune, the populace murdered the Bishop of Exeter with other distinguished men of the King’s party ; and Mr. Smalley and I escaped in the confusion, though as homeless outlaws. For myself, you see me here, living indeed, but in a guise unbefitting a peer of the realm. As to my dear friend Mr. Addlestrop Smalley—a man ready at all times to shed his heart’s blood in defence of Catholic principles—I may say, alas, with the most literal truth, ‘ Some evil beast hath devoured him ! ’ A herd of wild swine came suddenly upon us in this great forest. I climbed a tree ; my poor friend was less prompt or less fortunate. His Book of Hours, trampled and torn almost beyond recognition, with a few blood-stained fragments of Jaeger underclothing, were all that I found of a man who, under happier auspices, had made the bench of bishops tremble at his nod. As for myself—burning with

sympathy for those Catholic folk, I am compelled to dwell among them as a heathen among heathens! I dare not even beg for such rags as would render me less obvious to their prejudices. I have subsisted for three mortal days on such husks as the swine have left me; and now my one hope lies in you. I will wait here in the woods, on the outskirts of the town. You, of your charity, will buy me suitable clothes and bring them out to me, that I may be once more a man among men!"

Duvet was ready to do all in his power to save his lordship; meanwhile he told briefly his own story and Rashleigh's: passing lightly over their difficulties and laying stress mainly on all the pleasant novelties they had seen. In a few minutes the road turned another corner, and they came to a little knoll under the edge of a wood, from whence the ground sloped gently down again to the river and the marshes, leaving a broad view of the estuary and the open sea. At the mouth of the river, only four or five miles distant, lay the little town of Harwich—not, as we see it now, with its slender spire and slate roofs and great machine-made quay crowded with warehouses and steamboats—but a tiny collection of red-roofed and thatched houses, above which rose a small white church tower. And here, under the edge of the wood, they found Rashleigh sitting on the ground, his face buried in his hands. He looked up as he heard their steps, and pointed without a word to the peaceful little old-world village that meant the wreck of all his hopes. The tears stood in his eyes, for

all that he could do ; only now, when his hopes were dashed utterly to the ground, did he know how completely all the desire of his heart had hung upon a common modern railway train.

“Cheer up, my friend,” cried the peer, with well-meant but somewhat patronising encouragement. “I myself have sometimes been almost as despondent during my uphill fight for our Catholic liberties. It is a common enough experience that a single ill-advised word causes lifelong regret ; we have all three spoken unadvisedly with our lips, and here we are !”

“But, with all deference to your lordship,” said Duvet, “and all sympathy with what is unfortunate in your personal plight (which, however, the first change of clothes will at once set right), I cannot but think that it is a great privilege. . .”

“Oh, a great privilege, no doubt,” replied the peer with as much enthusiasm as he could muster. “I may even say—er—yes, a great privilege, as you say. Only . . . it may, of course, be merely the unlucky accident of my present position, but I own that I am somewhat disappointed in these people. They seem to me to fall very, very far short of what, with their unique Church privileges, they might have been. Making all allowances, I have found a great want of *savoir faire* among these people, with a corresponding lack of ordinary courtesy and consideration for those who differ from them. I was able to see this all the more clearly, as I took care to tell the King that, though of Chinese birth, I was a baptised Christian. Yet, over and over again, when I

spoke in an unquestionably Catholic sense, and could have proved my words by the most irrefragable patristic evidence, my words were scouted by men who called themselves competent theologians, as evident Chinese corruptions of the faith ! Again, I have met many worthy people, many kind-hearted, but scarcely one—you will not think me snobbish for using our modern word—scarcely one whom I should call a *gentleman*. And the language that even ladies use—have you listened at all to the talk of the women ? ”

“ Let us make a distinction, my lord,” put in Duvet in his soft voice. “ The divine economy seldom lavishes all its gifts at once ; and, when a nation has the supreme gift of faith, we constantly see that God denies her, as comparatively unnecessary, many of those lesser virtues which, being more obvious, are often regarded as the only virtues by unthinking people. Your lordship is no doubt aware of the Catholic distinction between the *theological* and the *natural* virtues.”

“ Without undue vanity,” replied the nobleman with some hauteur, “ I had hoped that my public statements at different times, and my well-known—but after all, you are of the Roman allegiance, and are therefore not bound to know it. No, sir, after making all possible allowances, I confess to finding myself grievously disappointed. I may perhaps claim without undue egotism to know *something* of the religious spirit of the Catholic past. It is, in fact, this knowledge, and the sympathy bred of accurate knowledge, which have perhaps given me such small prominence as I have enjoyed, and have enabled me to be of such

small use to the Church as (under God's mercy) I have been humbly enabled to be. Yet I grieve to say that—even among the so-called upper classes here—nay, among the very clergy themselves, I have seldom found that *je ne sais quoi* of subtle grace which one always recognises in a real earnest Catholic. And, the common people . . . sir, I am compelled to speak of the common people as absolute barbarians. I took many opportunities of catechising them, and I found the majority not only ignorant of the very rudiments of the faith, but most unwilling—I may say most aggressively unwilling—to suffer themselves to be taught. No," added Lord Halfwayhouse, in that tone which leaves nothing more to be said, "I am grievously disappointed in these people."

The three travellers were now within a couple of miles of Harwich, and it seemed prudent to leave the beaten track for the shelter of a belt of trees that skirted the marsh. Here they found, some half-mile from the town, a quiet hollow, in which they left the disconsolate peer, who besought them earnestly and repeatedly to return as soon as possible with some sort of medieval garments. "And you will do your best," pleaded he, "to procure me such as have not already been worn by others?"

"I'm afraid the slop-shop isn't invented in these days, my lord."

"Well, at least you will be careful *who* has worn them. If you had seen what I have seen! . . . I trust to your kindness to do your best," he pleaded again in a pathetic voice when they were already almost out of earshot.

## CHAPTER VIII

### RIVAL INFALLIBILITIES

IT seemed prudent, as Duvet pleaded, to go first and see about their own passage to the Continent before undertaking this commission for their new friend, so they went straight down to the port. Here, after several hours' search and much altercation with divers shipmen, they at last found a French skipper, with whom Duvet drove a fairly satisfactory bargain. He was willing to take them to Rochelle for a heavy consideration, but would not be ready to start until next morning at ebb-tide. This bargain at last concluded, they found their way to a huckster who, after making a favour of changing £10 of Rashleigh's outlandish sovereigns into half their value in coin of the realm, produced at their request some shabby hosen and shabbier coats, out of which Rashleigh picked those which seemed most passable to the naked eye. With these rolled up under his arm, and a great loaf of bread under Duvet's, they took their way through the narrow streets towards the *rendezvous* outside the town. On the market place they found signs of great excitement among the people: some hurrying across the square, and the rest talking together with a most

un-English wealth of gesticulation. The fat butcher standing at his shop-door next to the town hall had a communicative look, so Rashleigh stopped to ask him what was the matter.

“ ‘Tis said they have taken the chief of the robber-crew,” answered the man of flesh. “ An that be so, there will soon be fresh meat in this market-place, but not of my slaughtering. We shall see a merry game ; the shambles is a poor sight in comparison ! ”

“ Poor wretch ! ” ejaculated Rashleigh, half under his breath,

“ ‘ Poor wretch,’ quotha ! who hath slain more simple women and children, not to speak of men, than the worst wolf in the forest ! ‘ Poor wretch,’ quotha ! And whose garments hath ‘a under ‘a’s arm, and with what outlandish tongue doth ‘a speak ? There be two of the band yet abroad, my masters, outlandish men both ; whence come *ye* ? ”

“ We be poor priests, my friend,” pleaded Duvet smoothly.

“ ‘ Poor priests, my friend ! ’ ” echoed the butcher. “ Aye, priests it may be—and yet I misdoubt me sore—priests it may be, yet not therefore friends of mine. I have known more than a few that have been mere devourers of tithes, fawners upon the rich and oppressors of the poor. If thy comrade here be indeed a priest, these be no priestly garments that he beareth . . . For a poor friend, quotha ? Aye, red velvet and fine green cloth of Flanders (though somewhat worn, forsooth) for a poor friend ! Look ye here, my masters, ye shall give account to the

mayor and aldermen of this free town . . . What ! here cometh the poor wretch your friend ! ”

Sure enough, at that moment an angry crowd came surging into the market place, collected round a knot of some half-dozen mounted men who had much ado to force their way along. And, in the midst of this group, with his hands tied to an archer's stirrup, ambled no less a personage than Lord Halfwayhouse. The unfortunate nobleman was fitting his trot as best he could to the capricious motions of the horse, and seeking all the time to turn his face away from the unsavoury mud and street refuse with which the crowd continually pelted him. He was bareheaded, in his trousers and shirt, displaying very conspicuously a broad pair of scarlet silk braces worked by some devoted female hand with a medieval pattern in gold thread. Rashleigh started forward with a sudden impulse, but Duvet clutched him by the arm. “Are you mad ? ” he whispered. “If that butcher turns round and sees us still here we are lost men. This way,” he added, as the whole crowd, butcher and all, swept by and left them for a moment alone. A turret door stood open at one corner of the town-hall, into which Duvet half dragged his friend, and stealthily turned the key in the lock. He put his hand on Rashleigh’s mouth to check the protests which rose to his lips, and pointed through the tiny loophole, through which, themselves hidden in shadow, they could see one corner of the square. The butcher flitted past, with grisly oaths, and followed by a half-dozen other equally excited men. “They were here

even now," he cried ; " quick, to the East Gate and to the Port, and we shall have them yet ! "

" Come up," whispered Duvet, and they crept on tip-toe up the stair. At the top, they found themselves in the space between the vault of the great hall and the timber roof. It was evidently used now as a lumber-room for the miscellaneous properties of the yearly miracle-play. Gaudy but faded dresses hung on nails ; scaffold timbers leaned against the wall ; coils of rope, paste-board monsters, and grimacing masks were heaped up in one corner. The whole garret was dimly lighted by a few slits here and there, and by two great round holes that opened downward through the keystones of the vault into the vault itself. It was evident, from the babel of voices, that the prisoner had now been brought in.

" Can we leave him like this ? " whispered Rashleigh.

" Can we help leaving him ? What evidence could we give on his behalf ? If he cannot clear himself, what means have we of clearing him ? "

" Well, at any rate, we may hope the judges will soon find out his innocence now they have got him away from the rabble."

" You may be sure of that," said Duvet ; " even the *lay* judges. If it were a *clerical* court, of course there would be no question of his safety. Nothing has done the Church such cruel injustice as the modern Protestant idea which ascribes to the poor Inquisition all those horrors which are indeed often justly chargeable to the *lay* courts of the Middle Ages. On the contrary,

the Church always did her utmost to alleviate those horrors : read Father Sydney Smith . . . ”

At this moment a loud cry rose from the hall : “ The Lord Bishop ! Make way for the Lord Bishop ! ”

“ Do you hear ? ” whispered Duvet. “ Thank God, he is safe now . ”

The hubbub had sunk into a mere buzz, and every inflection of the Bishop’s clear voice was audible to our friends, who had crept close to one of the round air-holes. “ Children, ” he was saying, “ this is no robber whom we have taken, but worse than a robber. John the Scot with his band of outlaws have indeed slain men’s bodies, but this is one of those who slay men’s souls—a heretic, yea, and a prince of heretics. Behold this long black robe and the tall black mitre wherewith our brother the sheriff found him decked : these are the mass-robcs of Satan wherein these human fiends perform by night their abominable rites. We have found also about his person writings sufficient to damn him ten times over—a mass-book in the vulgar tongue, yet an outlandish kind of English, too ; and in the same tongue another scroll, written likewise with marvellous delicacy and exactness upon paper, as by no mortal hand, and addressed to the members of some synagogue of Satan styled the Anglican Catholic Society : in which scroll some person unknown, speaking in a style of more than Papal authority, doth ordain to the members of his sect certain dogmas of his own in matters of rites and ceremonies and canonical obedience, without which dogmas, as his style doth most plainly intend, there

can be no hope of salvation for priests or people ! At the end of which scroll, in the place where the signature of our lord the Pope is wont to stand, is written in a larger hand, but in the same outlandish characters, the single letter H. Which letter signifieth without doubt the name Haeret ; whereby it is evident that this prisoner of ours is a descendant and a follower of that John Haeret, so called from the obstinacy wherewith he did ever adhere to his own false and damnable doctrines, from whom all sects of heretics do take their origin and their name. Ha, fellow, what sayest thou for thyself ? ”

“ My lord,” gasped the prisoner, so faintly that our friends could scarcely catch his words, “ the society whereof you speak is neither secret nor unlawful.”

“ Hath it been approved by the Vicar of Christ ? What say’st thou, ha ? ”

“ My lord, it is a society truly Catholic.”

“ Ay, Catholic, so say all heretics in speaking of their own damnable errors. But I will examine thee in due form, as laid down by the holy and learned inquisitor Bernard Gui, friar preacher and Bishop of Tuy. Mark well my questions, sir prisoner—and ye, good folk, mark ye well his answers, and see whether the heretic stand not presently confessed ! Believest thou that Christ was born of a virgin ? ”

“ With all my heart.”

“ Now mark me, brethren,” cried the Bishop, “ that is the first subtlety of these heretics, even as the learned and subtle Bernard hath noted. For in saying

'With all my heart,' this fellow doth but intend to say within himself, 'With all my heart I cling to mine own damnable heresy.' Mark now again. Believest thou, fellow, in one Catholic Church ? "

"I believe," said the accused, speaking as slowly and as distinctly as possible, and taking care this time to repeat each word exactly as the question had been put to him : "I believe in one Catholic Church."

"Ha, fox !" cried the Bishop, "there we have thee again ! This is that second subtlety noted by Bernard, of those who, saying with their lips 'The one Catholic Church,' intend in their false hearts their own synagogue of Satan, which they foully feign to be the one Catholic Church. What, villain, thou wilt bandy words with me ? Now, mark me well this third time. Believest thou that God Almighty made the world and all things therein ? "

"My lord," answered the wretched prisoner with a groan, "how could I believe otherwise ? Am I not a Christian ? I protest, my lord, so far as in me lies, I have ever striven in every point to believe as a good Christian should."

The Bishop answered only with a greasy chuckle in his throat. "O Bernard, Bernard ! how didst thou paint these heretics to the life ! Mark me, my masters, how this villain hath answered me with the fourth subtlety familiar to these wolves in sheeps' clothing : namely, with the subtlety of feigned astonishment ! 'Good Christian,' quotha !—and we should hearken to all that plead themselves good Christians, how then should we ever find means to convict these

heretics of their damnable doctrines! . . . What, fellow, wilt thou next plead, as is the wont of thy brethren, that thou art but a simple man, ignorant of all subtle doctrines, and fearful of replying before a spiritual judge to delicate questions of faith, as being fraught with pitfalls wherein the ignorant may lightly stumble? ”

“ Nay, my lord ”—this time in a firm and defiant tone, which showed that the Bishop, after long scratching Lord Halfwayhouse, had at last caught the President of the Anglican Catholic Society—“ no, my lord, I utterly repudiate any such plea, which I should be the last man to put forward. Those who know me—and my name is a household word to millions—are well aware that I have never shrunk from any discussion in matters of faith, however high or deep or intricate.”

“ So far as I follow the sense of thy words,” replied the Bishop (for Lord Halfwayhouse in his excitement had lapsed into the most sonorous modern controversial style), “ thou avowest thyself to be the archpriest, the pope, of these heretics? ”

“ No pope, my lord, for it is against our conscience to own allegiance to the Bishop, I will not say of Rome, but to any Bishop whatever, except in so far as his decrees are consonant with true Catholic custom, which we, who have studied so much more deeply than the episcopal bench, naturally know far better than they. *Catholic*, my lord, is a Greek word, meaning originally *universal*, and the great mallet of the heretics, Vincentius Lirinensis, defines things Catholic

as 'those which have been held ever, everywhere, and by all Christians.' Now, my lord, incense is in this sense a Catholic custom—pardon this digression, but it is of the utmost importance that I make my views perfectly clear to you; and I must express myself here, as I always have done, in my own way. Incense, my lord, is so far a Catholic custom that, though it was almost certainly not used in Christian churches during the first ages of persecution, and, when first introduced, it was employed less with a ceremonial intent than to cleanse the vitiated air of the sacred building; yet we find definite traces of its use in some parts of Christendom some three centuries after our Lord's death, so that, at this distance of time, we may say in the true or theological sense that it has been held ever, everywhere, and by all; from which it follows that it is the duty of all true Catholics to spurn the petty tyranny of such Bishops as forbid the use of incense. So, too, with the Hail Mary! I cannot do without my Hail Mary! The Bishop says I must. As a layman, I am untouched by his decision, since the last 400 years have gradually freed the laity from episcopal control. But, you will say, a cleric following my doctrines would come into conflict with his Bishop. Not so, my lord; it is we who stand on the rock of antiquity, against which the Bishop may rage in vain. What though we hear nothing of the worship of the Blessed Mary for many years after her death? What though certain early fathers would seem definitely to reject it? When once we find this worship in Catholic history, it dawns

as a growing light through the mists of ages—first faintly, then clearer and clearer—until at last it shines in all its modern glory, the most Catholic of Catholic customs. Do you follow me, my lord?"

The Bishop, who had been struck dumb by this torrent of strange words, found his voice at last. "If I understand thee aright, thou defiest the constituted authority of Bishops, and blasphemest the Holy Mother of God."

"Merciful heavens, how can my plain words be so mistaken! Hear me then one moment more. My lord, I find it hard to gather my thoughts: your myrmidons have been somewhat rough with me . . . My lord, in the land wherein I dwell . . . and yet it is the same land as this; yet again it is another land . . . Yes," he broke out with a scornful laugh, "I never knew till to-day how much better a land; and I shall be a wiser man my whole life after. Yet even here I will cleave to my faith; and no man shall say that Lord Halfwayhouse ever feared the face of mortal Bishop. I owe you in one sense the deepest respect and obedience, my lord; but, in the higher sense, it is my painful duty to withstand you to your face. It is not my fault if I know more of these things than you. Even as, in my own age, my theological studies raised me, a humble layman, above the vulgar herd of the Erastian episcopacy, so in these days I enjoy the advantage of having been born nearly six hundred years later than you, and traced the march of history . . . Nay, hear me out this once . . . my head aches and reels, and I scarcely hear my own words . . . I hate Luther,

Wycliffe, and all heresiarchs with all my heart and soul ; the one aim of my life has been to make the Church of England a joy and a praise upon earth. If the Bishops resist that aim, they will drive out of their Church many men whom she can ill spare . . . men who would rather shed their heart's blood than obey any mere outward authority against their own conscience and their own knowledge of history. I have spoken, my lord," added the prisoner, with a laugh which should have been scornful, but which broke into a somewhat hysterical falsetto.

There was a moment's pause, and then the smooth voice of the Bishop was again heard. " My sons, we have here the last subtlety of your old and crafty heretic. When all other subterfuges fail, and questions unanswerable are pressed upon him, then he will say, ' For God's sake, spare me now, for I am sick, and cannot think ' ; and then if a breathing-space be allowed him, he will retire to his bed and meditate what devilish falsehood he may answer at his next question. Or, if this too fail, at the very last he will feign himself mad, or an idiot, even as King David let the spittle run down upon his beard, and scabbled on the doors of the gate. He will utter speeches full of sound and fury, yet void of sense, laughing loud between-whiles, and then breaking out again into vain and impertinent words, yet not without certain outward glimmerings of reason, even as the beggars jangle at the church doors with sacred phrases picked up magpie-fashion from them that serve at the altar. All this hath Brother Bernard duly noted, and scores of times have I noted it for

myself. Yet few can feign so subtilly but that some signs of the real man will come out ; and specially some signs of that self-trust and vainglory which hath ever been the root of all heresies. Furthermore, Holy Church hath ever one effectual remedy for this feigned madness. Having had recourse in vain to spiritual persuasion, we may now leave the rest to the secular arm. We ourselves will tarry in this hall, that our sacred character be not defiled by any guilt of blood ; prithee, Master Mayor, let bring this fellow forthwith into the inner chamber, where I doubt not your serjeants have all things in readiness. But first, my master, see that ye divest him of this embroidered blood-red scapular, wherein lieth doubtless some devilish charm to protect his body against the Question. And hark ye, Master Mayor, question him not too roughly at the first ; when the prisoner's limbs are once well stretched, a single turn will oft-times suffice, more especially when due pains have been taken to set forth in order unto him the divers pains which are yet to follow, if need be, in case of obstinacy."

The Bishop ceased ; there was a momentary gurgle as if the prisoner had tried again to speak, and had been suddenly silenced by a rough grip of his windpipe. Then hundreds of voices buzzed again round the hall, and it was plain that the first act of this tragi-comedy was over.

## CHAPTER IX

### DARKNESS AND CRUEL HABITATIONS

THE two friends looked at each other for a moment; in the dim light of their hiding-place each could read blank dismay on the other's face. Duvet broke the silence first with a rather forced attempt at cheerfulness. "You needn't take it so seriously, old fellow," he whispered. "I think I quoted to you once before Father Rickaby's true and consoling assurance in his Catholic Truth Society pamphlet: 'The Church Never Persecutes.' Superficial appearances have been sometimes against her, but, when the matter is thoroughly looked into, the prejudice always proves to have rested upon some peculiarly Protestant misconception."

"But you heard him."

"Oh, that was merely an empty threat—ill-advised, I grant you, but only a threat after all."

"I don't know; there was a business-like coolness about the Bishop's directions which made my flesh creep . . . What on earth did he mean about taking off that 'blood-red scapular'?"

"Why, his braces, don't you see? The Bishop has never seen anything like modern braces, and he very naturally sees in them some snare of the devil."

"Good God ! what is there that may not damn a wretched prisoner when he has once fallen into the clutches of an ignorant and prejudiced old man ?"

"It's unlucky, of course, but we must make some allowance for the times ; it would be foolish of us to take the matter too tragically. Lord Halfwayhouse, fortunately, seems to know his own mind. The Bishop will soon cool down ; they will then find they have been talking all the while at cross-purposes ; and presently the whole matter will be explained."

"In that case, we could probably hasten the explanation by going down ourselves."

"For heaven's sake, don't be such a fool ! . . . There is such a thing as moderation in all things . . . The Bishop has lost his temper as it is, would you further irritate him by adding another incomprehensible factor to the problem ? I don't for a moment deny the existence of a serious misconception at present, but we should only complicate it by our uncalled-for interference."

"But if the Church . . ."

"*The Church never persecutes,*" hissed out Duvet between his half-clenched teeth, cutting out each single word as clearly as Miss Wirt cut the notes out of Major Ponto's piano.

"But this Bishop ?"

"This Bishop is not the Church. Is there no appeal to Rome ? There are some Catholic principles, my dear Herbert, which you seem very slow to grasp."

"But will Rome conjure me back a fresh limb, if these ruffians tear me one out of its socket ? It isn't that I am not a thoroughly loyal Catholic, my dear

Duvet, only I do like to square the truths you quote from your Truth Society pamphlets with the facts as I see them."

" Still, I think you might avoid anticipating difficulties that never come. If there were any question of *real* torture here, for instance . . . "

At this moment he was interrupted by a blood-curdling groan from the smaller room, followed by agonised cries and protestations. A yell of savage joy rose up from a thousand mouths in the hall, with an under-current of coarse laughter, yet through all this din they could still hear the unfortunate nobleman's cries for mercy. Then the cries ceased, the hubbub quieted down in the hall; a door creaked heavily, and suddenly there was a dead silence.

" Well, what saith the fellow," asked the Bishop impatiently.

" My lord, he professeth himself to be a peer of this realm, Lord Halfwayhouse by name."

" Lord Holofernes belike !" quoth the Bishop, and the crowd shouted again in derision. " Who ever heard of such a lord in this realm of ours ? Give him one turn more, my masters ! "

The door creaked again; again the silence of expectation was broken first by horrid groans and cries, and then by the ghastly merriment of the hall, sinking at last almost equally suddenly into dead silence.

" My lord, he professeth himself now to be whatsoever your lordship would have him, saving only his faith in Christ."

“ Say rather, his faith in Antichrist ! But what sort of a confession is this, ‘that he will say whatsoever I will’ ? See ye not, my masters, how he confesseth himself thereby a child of Satan, who was a liar from the beginning, in that he is ready now to swear to any lie. Herein, my brethren, may ye see the diversity of these new heretics from the ancient martyrs of the Catholic faith ; for the martyrs, as it is written in the scriptures, not only endured all manner of torments, but scoffed at them and overcame them ; whereas these others, even at the first sort of torments, are straight-way overcome by the truth. Have ye not heard how it is written of St. Reparata in the Martiloge ; how by Decius the Emperor she was racked ; her flesh rent with hooks, and her body sprinkled with boiling lead ; then she was broiled like to St. Laurence, her breasts and ribs burnt with fiery plates ; and then scourged with thorny bushes, her wounds rubbed with vinegar, salt and *aqua vitæ* ; and at the last, after all her torments, she was beheaded ; yet not for one moment did she deny her faith ! Master Racksman, bear back word to Master Mayor that this confession is no confession ; let the fellow be examined point by point upon the tenour of these articles here written, wherein the main heads of all modern heresies are set forth in order.”

The shrieks, with accompaniment of jibes and laughter, began again with redoubled intensity, and Rashleigh started from where he lay, exclaiming aloud “I can’t stand this any longer ! ”

“ For God’s sake, do nothing rash . . . I don’t

understand it myself . . . there is some ghastly mistake here . . . But what can we do ? ” Duvet hurried after his friend, who was moving towards the stair head.

“ You are not going down ? ”

“ I am going somewhere to get away from this hell ; but I promise you I won’t go into the street.”

“ You swear you won’t ? ”

“ D—— you, yes ! ” replied Rashleigh, with a literal obedience which we may trust the recording angel to forgive.

“ I must go back,” replied Duvet, more meekly ; “ we cannot afford to remain in ignorance of what these men intend.” He crept to the opening just in time to hear the Bishop’s clerk reading out the articles of the prisoner’s last confession :—

“ Item, he confesseth to be the pope of these new heretics, and that his true name and title among them is the Lord Holofernes Haeret.

“ Item, that the said black robes, and tall black mitre, and blood-red scapula, are the insignia due unto him as pope of these heretics, and that the curiously written document found in an inner fold of the said robes is indeed a Bull issued by him under his said false authority as pope of antichrist, counselling contradiction, defiance and resistance to the Bishops of the Catholic Church lawfully appointed, and exhorting steadfast adherence to all ceremonies of his own heresy aforesaid, the ban and prohibition of such lawfully-appointed Bishops notwithstanding.

“Item, that the heretical ceremonies of his sect, which in the said false Bull are not specifically stated, are in truth as follows :—

“*Imprimis.* He and his fellow heretics are wont to meet at midnight in underground cellars or ruined churches, or within the forest ; and there to sing their mass to Satan.

“*Secundo.* The said Satan appearing among them in the shape of a black cat upon the altar, all the said heretics are by their said blasphemous law bound to kiss his tail.

“*Tertio.* After the said blasphemous mass with profane and devilish malice sung or said, then do all present partake of the body and blood of Beelzebub in this manner following :—

“A knave child of nine weeks old, born out of wedlock within this same synagogue of Satan, is roasted at a slow flame until he be brought to black ashes ; which aforesaid ashes are mingled with wine in a flask, and given to drink unto all present.

“*Quarto.* Item, all lights being suddenly extinguished, the said heretics in this their conventicle of Satan were ever wont. . . . . Nay, my lord, I forget : to this one article we could not bring him to own : but rather he did protest himself to be a man of clean life.”

“And thou didst weakly condone this his damnable obstinacy, and cease or relax thy questioning ? ”

“Nay, my lord ; but presently thereupon he fell into a sudden faintness, after that he had said and

repeated words which seemed to us in no way pertinent to our purpose."

"Read me then those words from thy notes, Master Clerk."

"My lord, written down as nearly as I could catch their import, and purged of all vain repetitions, they run as here ensueth: 'Oh my lungs and liver: oh goroo, goroo!'"

"Ha, ha!" chuckled the Bishop, "thou callest now on very demons for help! Let us see now whether they will come to help thee. Said I not truly, Master Rackster, how that blood-red scapula was doubtless the charm wherein he trusted, and for lack whereof the pain gnaweth even now at his vitals. Thou hast taken heed to sprinkle the rack and the prisoner from moment to moment with holy water?"

"At every fresh turn, my lord."

"Keep it well sprinkled still, Master Rackster, and let us see now whether his Goroo will come to help him."

"My lord," put in the clerk in a tone of some compassion, "meseemeth that we have already fulfilled all that is of strict necessity. '*Decenter tormentatus*,' saith the holy Bernard, 'a reasonable application of torture,' after which, if the accused make no further confession, he need be questioned no further."

"Well, well, we will look to that; let us now see him here in the hall; bring ye him in forthwith." Subdued groans were presently heard, with steps as of men bearing a heavy burden, and this time the crowd, with the living image of suffering before their faces, seemed for the moment to forget their cruel jubilation.

“We have sent for thee,” began the Bishop, “that these simple folk here may hear thee avow with thine own lips that same confession and recantation which my clerk hath taken down . . . . nay, hear me. Read forth, Master Clerk.” And the clerk began droning out his formal protocol again. “I, Holofernes Haeret, falsely styling myself Lord of Halfwayhouse, have fully avowed and confessed the articles herein-after ensuing, of mine own free will, all seduction, violence of tortures, persuasions, and bribes, ceasing and having been removed. . . . ”

“Good God ! ” groaned out the victim.

“My lord,” broke in another voice, “can this indeed be so ? ”

“What, Master Mayor, know ye not the forms of justice in these matters requisite ? Our holy Mother Church, being in all matters ever merciful, requireth that the prisoner make his confession apart from all torment ; so that, having now parted him from the torture and put out of his sight all the instruments thereof, we are bound to cause him to repeat his first confession publicly and of his own free will. If, blinded by malice and by the wiles of the devil—which God forbid—he retract under this second examination that which he hath already avowed in his first, then do we adjudge this his instability in his evidence to be such a fresh proof of his guilt as enableth us—nay, as compelleth us in very duty—to put him again to the question, and somewhat more sharply than before. . . . Read on with the articles, Master Clerk.”

“My lord,” cried Lord Halfwayhouse, in a voice to

which the burning indignation of cruel wrong lent something of its former firmness : “once and for all, I protest against whatsoever I have confessed, or shall confess, under your devilish tortures. God only knows what foul obscenities you have made me say—things that I learn now for the first time, and such as the very fiends of hell could scarce have invented. I have spent my life, my lord, among a people differing from these of yours almost as men differ from brute beasts—where the speech of highborn men and women is at least pure; and where vice does at least pay the homage of hypocrisy to virtue. Coming from such a people to that state of society which I see around me here. . . .”

“Lead him forth, Master Rackster,” interrupted the Bishop; and the wretched prisoner broke off with a heart-rending groan.

“My lord,” broke in the Mayor’s voice, “may not this much suffice for one day?”

“By the grace of God, Master Mayor, provoke me not to wrath. What are these matters to thee?”

“My lord,” answered the Mayor in a bold voice, “it was your lordship’s self who gave over this poor wretch to the secular arm with a plea for mercy. My brethren and I exercise the secular justice of this good town; true Catholics all, and ready to pay due respect to Holy Church; but, my lord, we have also within our bosoms the hearts of men.”

“And I too, Master Mayor, as God shall judge me at the last day; but at that dreadful doom I must needs answer also for the souls of my flock; and though

to you this fellow, even in his foul heresies, beareth the likeness of a man, yet to us who bear the burden of all the churches, he is worse than a wolf or an adder, slaying and devouring, not indeed the bodies, but the immortal souls of men. And, Master Mayor, I would have thee remember that the choice is not thine, to say *I will* or *will not*, but that Holy Church can and will smite with instant excommunication all that refuse their help for the extermination of these wolves of the soul. . . . Enough, Master Mayor; not for thy proud words' sake, but of our own clemency, we remit further question of this pestilent fellow until the morrow. Let fetch the leeches, and see to his sores, that we may be certified of his fitness to bear our question on the morrow."

"My lord," protested a smoother voice, "doth not our instruction forbid the renewing of any torment once ended, and have not our best authorities defined that such prohibition doth set the limit of a single natural day for the question by torture?"

"Thou art and ever wilt be a fool, Master Clerk; it is not six months since we examined this same point together, and found how the learned Bernard setteth forth that such a repetition on the second day must be held not truly as a *renewal*, such as the law doth indeed forbid, but as a *continuation*, such as lieth at the full discretion of the judges. As to the *third* day, he doth indeed admit grave doubt."

"My lord!" broke in a breathless voice, "the wretched man hath even now given up the ghost, under the very hands of Master Leech, who had twice

bled him, and was about to assure his cure by a third blood-letting."

"*Requiescat in inferno,*" replied the Bishop in a solemn voice. "May he rest in hell, with those faithless Jews whom the folk slew in London at their last rising. And now, my good folk, the day draweth to eventide, and a runner hath even now brought me tidings how my Lord Sheriff with his men pursueth this devil's two comrades through the forest that lieth towards Ipswich. Wherefore keep silence now, that I may dismiss ye all with my blessing: and go ye all in peace homewards to pray this night that Holy Church be kept in quietness, and that all who trouble her may be, within a brief space, even as this man here. *Dominus vobiscum,* my good folk."

"*Et cum spiritu tuo,*" droned the clerk; and stuffing his scrolls and ink-horn into his bosom, he went over to the Blue Boar to drink a quart of penny ale with the butcher. Duvet listened impatiently to the shuffling and jostling of departing feet, until the last woman had dragged out the last reluctant child, hoping against hope that the bad man might revive sufficiently to be tortured again. At last the great doors closed with a clangour of iron bars, the key grated harshly in the lock, and all was silent.

## CHAPTER X

### FROM THE SNARE OF THE FOWLER

DUVET crept stealthily downwards, delighted to believe that their pursuers were on the wrong scent, but very sensible of the need for caution. Five minutes later, Rashleigh, at the bottom of the stairs, heard a step close above him, and Duvet's voice whispering to him to come up. He followed his companion upstairs, and Duvet began to tell all that had happened, but Rashleigh had learnt it already from the chatter of the crowd as they passed by his little loophole. "They are not so unkind at the bottom, those rough fellows," he said. "Now that it is done, nearly all of them spoke as men heartily sorry for the job. But I thought them very devils at first."

"You must make some allowance for their point of view, my dear fellow. It is inconceivable to them that men can doubt of the truths of the Catholic religion except out of sheer malice."

"The more earnest of them may perhaps plead that excuse, but if only you had heard the blasphemies to which I listened during this last quarter of an hour, it would have opened your eyes a bit. The old butcher stood at his doors there, and said things about the

Blessed Virgin—out of mere grossness and thoughtlessness, no doubt—but he said things compared with which all the heresies I ever read of would sound harmless. And a drunken man, who wanted to open our door. . . . ”

“ I have no doubt it is to some extent with these people as it is with the modern Italians and Spaniards, whose blasphemies are indeed foul beyond all belief. We must beware, as Newman says, of judging a religion by the common people. It seems as though, by some mysterious law, extremes must always touch each other in this life of ours ; and those nations which are most conspicuous for true faith are also, on the other hand, hotbeds of freemasonry and anti-clerical rage, and the grossest atheism. As to this terrible scene, I have no doubt whatever that it is simply another of our trials in this strange vision which God has vouchsafed for our probation. It is probable that Lord Halfwayhouse is all this time safe in his own splendid mansion, and that this is only a vision for our edification ; or, so far as it has any object in reality, it may be sent to open his lordship’s eyes to his awful position—he who stands so literally on the very edge of the truth, and yet so far away from it, while he still shuts his eyes to the one thing needful. You must have seen by this time that, when he professes to fight for Catholicity against the Bishop, he is really advocating undisguised, wilful private judgment. How can we know that incense and the worship of the blessed saints have been held ever, everywhere, and by all, except through faith in the One infallible authority which tells us so ?

There is no trace of these things for centuries in mere history ; nay, I am told that Origen, two hundred and fifty years after our Lord's death, very emphatically repudiated the idea of Catholics either possessing images or paying them any reverence whatever. Alone in the cold, comfortless twilight of history, we do indeed wander hopelessly astray. But Christ's Vicar tells me that those images, of which Origen never heard, have yet been through all the ages one of the chief channels by which Christians have approached their Maker. Once the Pope has thus spoken, the matter is removed forthwith from the domain of history into that of indefeasible truth ; and I believe at once—nay, were it ten times more incredible, I believe all the more firmly, according to that noble saying of Tertullian, *credo quia incredibile*. And think, my dear friend, what a warning this is to us ! If, before you had been reconciled in heart to the true Church, you had been called suddenly to God's judgment seat, how would you have answered His first question, ‘ Why, being so near to the truth as thou wert—being Catholic in all but one thing—didst thou yet close thine ears, like the deaf adder, to that one thing necessary ? Depart from me, thou accursed— ’ ’

“ No, hang it all, old man ! I can't believe it can be quite so bad as that in heaven.”

“ Could you have believed it was as bad as this on earth ? ” enquired Duvet, who did not relish the interruption to his flowing periods, though he was, indeed, conscious of having a little overstepped those delicate

refinements of argument with which modern Romanists manage on the one hand to urge the extreme necessity of Romanism to salvation, while on the other hand they disclaim the straightforward brutality with which their ancestors damned Protestants out of hand. . . . . “We are in the ages of faith,” he went on, “and faith does not merely consist in believing what happens to be soft and pleasant to think of.”

“No, indeed! . . . . I should very much like,” continued Rashleigh reflectively, “to hear a frank confession of faith from that man who was grumbling at our door just now. I couldn’t manage to be shocked at him—I was too amused all the time. He evidently couldn’t quite make out whether he had been drunk when, some hours ago, he imagined himself to have brought the key with him and unlocked it; or whether the impossibility of opening it now was due to present intoxication. The butcher and other bystanders didn’t help him with the door, but only played chorus to his blasphemies. His main complaint seemed to be that he had to go right to the other end of the town now for the key, and to face his wife into the bargain.”

“Do you mean this door of ours, this staircase door?”

“I do. I suppose I ought really to have been startled, only I can’t for the life of me take these things seriously, when once they are past. They seem to shift and change in just the kaleidoscopic sort of way that dreams do.”

“Dream or no, we’ve got no time to lose. It must be as dark as pitch outside; there’s a sea-fog, and one

can scarcely see the light of the loopholes. I've found a good coil of rope, and I should advise you to look yourself out some good disguise among the old garments up there."

"All right. But stay. I think I'll just put on the clothes I bought for poor Lord Halfwayhouse."

"I—the fact is—I've got those on already," confessed Duvet, and it was too dark for Rashleigh to see whether he blushed or not.

"Hang it all! Who the deuce gave you leave? I bought the things, didn't I?"

"I suppose you did; but that didn't occur to me at the moment. You see, I thought you would disguise yourself so much better by cutting all your hair off. Mine hasn't grown enough to make much difference."

"Have you got scissors for me, then?"

"No; but I felt sure you would have."

"You felt sure?"

"That is—I thought . . . ."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I *have*; but I didn't think you'd have gone and sneaked my clothes, all the same. However, it was you who did nearly all the bargaining with the skipper, and he won't have looked much at me to notice the difference of my appearance. And I daresay I can find a rig-out here, too." He lit a match and shaded it very carefully under his cloak, as he rummaged about among the discarded properties for something to suit his purpose. At last he pitched upon a fusty old Franciscan frock and cowl, into which he tied himself, not without some natural

human qualms, with a bit of rope. The transformation was so successful that Duvet was moved with envy, and rummaged for another frock, but in vain. And there was no time to lose.

“Look here,” he said; “this is the safest side. I’ve reconnoitred this loophole already. It looks into a narrow lane.”

The rope was fortunately not only strong, but so long also that they were able to double it, and thus to pull it away with them after use. The height was nothing formidable—they might almost have dropped so far with impunity—and a few minutes saw them safely in the dark little lane, and the rope thrown away behind a rubbish-heap. Just here and there they met a citizen groping his way home to supper, who naturally took them for honest fellow-citizens on the same business. A word or two of greeting, and both parties were lost again to each other in the fog. The port was close by. A second narrow lane brought them down to the wharf-side, where they seemed safe enough now till dawn. They soon found a great stack of wool-bales, among which they crept in silence, and in a few minutes even Rashleigh had forgotten all the horrors and perils of the day, and was sleeping the sleep of the just.

He was wakened by Duvet shaking his arm, and laying a hand on his mouth. It was broad daylight, with only a few wisps of the night’s fog still moving over the river. “They are beginning to stir on board the boat,” said Duvet; “shall we risk it now?” They crept quietly out, picked themselves clean of

wool-flocks behind the heap of sacks, and then, sallying bravely forth, as though they had just come down from their inn, hailed the vessel. Great was their relief to see a boat cast loose almost at once and row towards them, for there were two or three early loafers already about on the quay. One of these, before the boat had come to land, looked up and stared somewhat suspiciously at Duvet.

“Good Morrow, my son,” said Rashleigh, in a sepulchral voice, from under the depths of his hood.

“Good Morrow, holy father,” replied the man, looking still at Duvet, to whom he presently said, “Hast thou heard aught of those other two heretics, companions of him that was slain yestereve ?”

“Ay, marry ! that have I,” answered Duvet without a moment’s hesitation. “Last night, somewhat before curfew, when we were in the Town Hall, they were there too. And right sorry, I warrant you, to find themselves there ; but it was told me that they should be taken away to-day about this hour. . . . . An ye make all haste now into the town, ye will doubtless have seen them ere they depart. . . . .”

“St. Edmund taught me that answer,” added he, with a smile, as the man thanked him civilly and hurried off. “The saints’ lives have other things than mere theology to teach us, Rashleigh.”

“What an actor you would make !”

“I do talk old English pretty well now, don’t I ? That comes of having been something of a linguist from my youth. You may still have reason to thank

your stars that you travel with a man who had his first schooling in a French convent."

They reached the ship safely, and watched now with feverish impatience all the little preparations for departure. At last the captain gave orders to weigh anchor; but just at that moment their loafer of half an hour ago came running out upon the quay, with others straggling after him from the lane, all gesticulating and shouting madly. One man ran to a row-boat, which he began to cast loose from the quay.

"What the — are they all about?" asked the skipper in good nautical French.

"Put off, my master," answered Duvet, "it's that red-faced villain to whom I dealt a clout of the head this morning ere we left our inn for speaking ill of *la belle France*, and who now, it seemeth, would fain raise the town against us."

"Ay, is it so?" cried the skipper; "be easy, my friend, Jean Reboul hath had such little affairs on his hands before to-day; the sail is filling apace, and not all the monkey-tailed Englishmen on the seas will catch us now." He walked to the gunwale and saluted the shouting crowd on the quay with a gesture more expressive than polite. "You are good French, sir," said he to Duvet, "though your speech be somewhat strange."

"Ay, for I have lived most of my life among those English, and the tongue grows thick with their muddy ale; but the heart, *mon ami*, the heart——"

"Aye, aye—and your friend here?"

" My friend by birth is English, but the holy sons of St. Francis are at home in all countries."

" Ay, and in all drinks too. I warrant he is not so English but he will help us twain to empty a stoup of right good Gascon wine."

The stoup was duly drained without undue reluctance on any hand, and the honest captain, having swallowed his lion's share, saluted with a second medieval gesture of contempt the fast-disappearing crowd on the quay.

The breeze freshened rapidly after they had gained the open sea, and soon it blew a real gale. A gale in the Channel is bad enough at any time, but its horrors were multiplied tenfold to our travellers by the want of comfort and cleanliness on this little tossing cockleshell of a boat. The captain lost his bearings; for three days and three nights he ran as best he could before the gale, and all the while neither Rashleigh nor Duvet could swallow a mouthful of food or even call their souls their own. The persistence of the gale at last changed the captain's mind with regard to his two passengers, whom he began to regard in the light of Jonahs, and more than once discussed openly the advisability of throwing them overboard. An honest man in his way, Jean Reboul was still a sailor, and a medieval sailor to boot, who, like Chaucer's shipman, had thrown many a tall fellow into the sea before now. Our friends were not only in no state to resist him, but ready almost to accept even the sharpest remedy for their present mewling and puking. However, it fortunately happened that the wind abated so sensibly

on the fourth day as to persuade the captain again of their innocence and themselves of the value of life anywhere but on shipboard. Early on the fifth they sighted land, and before noon they staggered ashore, not, indeed, at La Rochelle, but at St. Valery.

## CHAPTER XI

### AFTER-DINNER REFLECTIONS

It was merry in the hall of the Bishop of Amiens ; beards and smooth chins wagged there with a right good will, though the beards were in a decided minority. Below the salt all were shaven crowns ; only here and there above it was a richly-dressed layman to be seen. Our two friends were enjoying themselves with the merriest, and Duvet was in his canonicals again, for they had arrived at an opportune moment. Sir Nicholas Grippegoutte, the miserly old rector of St. Stephen-without-the-Gates, had been found dead in his bed that morning, black in the face and, as some averred, with the marks of the devil's fingers still plain on his throat. The Bishop's servants, after ferreting out from a score of different hiding-places some seven hundred marks in specie, together with many bonds for money lent out at usurious interest, had tossed the more worthless contents of his house into the street. Among these Duvet, coming by at the right moment, had found a *cappa*, or regulation buttoned parson's cloak, which had once been snuff-coloured, together with a somewhat threadbare hosen to match. Thus arrayed, he had accompanied Rashleigh to beg a little

money of the Bishop for their pilgrimage to the Pope. They found the prelate—a stately full-blooded man with red face and bushy white eyebrows—slowly pacing the cloister of his palace, chanting in a very fine bass voice canticles in honour of the Blessed Virgin, and only pausing at intervals to clear his throat with a draught of iced Burgundy. As a goblet stood in a niche at each corner of his cloister, it so happened that these intervals were not infrequent, and the Bishop was in one of his happiest moods. Moreover, he had just received a full account of Sir Nicholas Grippe-goutte's estate ; this was the third time within a month that he had made similar rich hauls from intestate clergy in his diocese, and his coffers were therefore unusually full. So he had bidden our two friends to dine with him that day ; “ and ye shall tell me what is a-doing in the realm of England, after which my steward shall count you out forty shillings each in good silver of Tours, and God speed ye to my lord the Pope ! ”

And now dinner was in full swing, and our friends, so lately tossed on the deep, looked happily down through a mist of steaming dishes and over a rolling sea of shaven crowns towards the other end of the great hall.

“ *Bibamus papaliter !* ” cried the Bishop, “ let us drink like popes, and to the health of our Holy Father John XXII., who hath set us so good an example. To your health, my Lord Vidame, and to yours, Master Archdeacon. What think ye, Brother Friar—thou there over against me at the table—of this wine

of Rochelle? It hath cost me five sols the quart, as I am a wretched sinner. Our own wines failed us last year, nor should we have wherewithal to maintain our proper state in this our palace to-day but for Sir Nicholas and two or three more of his kind. He was a niggard, that never spared a penny in his life to friend or to stranger; the fiend have his soul! for a wretched house he held all his lifetime; and that which he pinched together and hoarded up we spend here in our mirth. Brother Friar, thou hast the face of an honest man; I warrant me thou art none of these new-fangled verjuice-visaged papelards that wander about the country preaching against such prelates as keep a state accordant to their station in Holy Church."

"My lord," replied Duvet, "we have read the Scriptures, and know full well that the labourer is worthy of his hire."

"Ay, Sir Priest, and of a drink-penny over and above his strict hire, and at times an ell or two of good cloth to his back, an he have no churl to his master. Freely have I ever given to the poor, and freely hath the Lord given unto me. But as for these new hypocrites and heretics who would fain have a bishop go abroad like a beggar, they do but aim at the ruin of all authority in Holy Church, whereby they hope to gain freedom for their own damnable doctrines. Why, masters, were St. Peter himself alive in this most lamentable age of ours, little indeed would his holiness and his apostleship profit him without outward state and a strong arm withal. For, as saith the Wise Man in Proverbs, 'The poor is hated even

of his own neighbour, but the rich hath many friends' ; and again, ' All the brethren of the poor do hate him ; how much more do his friends go far from him.' Moreover, even the heathen philosopher Seneca writeth in his epistle to Gallio concerning the happy life—but I see well, Friar, thou takest thy wine as an honest man should, and when we are risen from this table my steward shall give unto thy fellow the wherewithal to come to the feet of our lord the Pope, whom Christ and His saints preserve ! And thou shalt tell me, on thy way homewards, whether thou hast found any cardinal of them all to give thee better wine than I, or to quote thee more readily from the Holy Scriptures and the ancient philosophers. *Bibamus papaliter*, my masters ! "

The reader will easily understand that our two friends were doing all this while such justice to the Bishop's good cheer as was natural in men who had been starved and tempest-tossed for four whole days. On a Friday, of course, there was no meat on the Bishop's table, but the board groaned with sturgeon and salmon, eel pasties and eel jellies, fat lampreys, pike or carp stewed in Malvoisie, and great dishes of rice and almonds boiled in milk ; moreover, there was a ceaseless flow of generous wine and jovial talk. " There may be queer spots in the Middle Ages," whispered Duvet to Rashleigh, " but we don't seem to have much difficulty in falling on our feet again. *Bibemus . . . bib-bob-bibomus . . . est malum Latinum sed optimum vinum ! . . .* What is that fellow singing over across the table ? " For a friar, who might have sat

as a model for Chaucer's "worthy limitour, Huberd," had produced from under the bench a small round instrument like a banjo without a neck, and was trolling forth one of those wicked bacchanalian ditties which have been preserved by the hundred in old monastic and cathedral libraries—

"Sed in neutro genere—vinum est divinum ;  
Loqui facit socios—optimum Latinum—"

"That ain't so with me," remarked Duvet again. "Lost most of my Latin on shipboard—think it went away into sea—rest of it seems to be going here—can't understand half of what these fellows say. . . *Bibomus, sodales, bibomus !*" he shouted enthusiastically to a fat priest, his neighbour, as the company clattered their cups on the oaken board in applause for the song. For the next quarter of an hour Rashleigh heard him muttering to himself, and ringing every possible phonetic change in a vain attempt to hit upon the first person plural present subjunctive of the verb *bibo*. Then, overcome by the labours and anxieties of the past five days, he laid his arms on the table and slept like a happy child.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was not so merry in the Bishop's prison at Amiens as it had been in the Bishop's hall. True the little cell was decidedly above the ordinary medieval standard of prison convenience, but it formed a cold and comfortless lodging at the best. Bare stone walls under a stone vault, a straw-littered floor, one tiny

barred window high up in the wall, under which lay the tower moat, foul with dead dogs and other nameless refuse, this is where we must look now for our two friends. They have slept heavily through the night, worn out by their travail on the sea, and not uncomforted by the Bishop's excellent Gascon wine ; and now a pale ray of morning light, creeping in through the loophole, has aroused them to a sense of their present position. Sitting up in the filthy straw, and each staring with haggard eyes at the other's unkempt figure dimly visible in the half-gloom of this mouldering dungeon, they looked, and felt themselves, pitiable objects indeed.

" Why on earth couldn't you hold your tongue ? " asked Duvet at last, and buried his throbbing temples in his hands.

" But didn't you begin it ? " enquired Rashleigh, in a tone more conciliatory, yet no less melancholy, than his friend's.

" I only encouraged the Bishop to show off his theological learning ; one could see he loved to talk, and if you had only listened we might have learnt a great deal that would have helped us to steer our way through this incomprehensible medieval world."

" But, my dear Duvet, he took my breath clean away ! "

" And mine too at first, but I had the good sense to hold my tongue. And, after all, is not the Bishop in the right ? "

" You mean that the blessed saints do *not* enjoy already the beatific vision of God's presence ? "

“If the Holy Father has said so: and there seems to be no doubt of that.”

“How, then, can they intercede for us with a God whom they don’t see?”

“If the Holy Father has said it——”

“And the Blessed Virgin herself! Can you possibly believe that she——”

“I can believe anything that the Holy Father has said. I have often grave doubts of you, my dear fellow: don’t you see that it is the rankest heresy to appeal against so plain a decree?”

“If He has decreed it . . . But is it possible? Can He have said it with that solemnity which would compel us to take His utterance as infallible?”

“At any rate the Bishop had no doubt, and that’s the practical point. We must distinguish carefully, as theologians and as men of sense, between *absolute* and *practical* infallibility. How far a papal pronouncement has been *absolutely* infallible, it is difficult to judge at the time when it is made—indeed, I may say almost impossible. It may well seem at first sight to have been delivered with every note of an *ex cathedra* decree; and yet the religious sense of the Church, finding a voice in the infallible decree of some succeeding pontiff, may detect in it some fatal flaw. You are no doubt aware how, for many years, the Church believed Pope Leo to have condemned Pope Honorius as a heretic; and how, until close upon the so-called Reformation, this was solemnly recited every year in the breviary. Yet, nowadays, any Catholic Defence lecturer will show you how this rests upon a series of

mere Protestant misconceptions. The *absolute* infallibility of any pope's utterances, therefore, is not a question which can be decided with any real certainty for years—it may be, not for centuries and centuries, after that utterance was made. That is a pity, you will say; for the present is precisely the time at which certainty would be most convenient—but we must make allowance for human nature and the world as we know it. Therefore we must often be content to do without *absolute* infallibility, and to guide ourselves by the *practical* infallibility which never fails the Church. The Holy Father makes a pronouncemeut. He himself considers himself to have spoken infallibly: he has by divine right the power of condemning as heresy any opinion opposed to his pronouncement: and there, for present purposes, you have practical infallibility. For, mind! it may be error and heresy to assert *even the truth itself*, in opposition to the Sovereign Pontiff. I will some day show you the matter argued out in the *Catholic Times.*"

"But we don't even know for certain that the Pope *has* made such a pronouncement. A man by my side whispered to me that the Pope had recently swallowed his own words again, in deference to a protest from the King and the University of Paris. He said the Sovereign Pontiff now pleaded that he had only thrown this doctrine out as a hint, a possibility; and that he was ready to stand corrected, in fair argument, even by a woman or a boy."

"My dear Rashleigh, *is* that likely?"

"Oh, if it comes to that, *is this* likely?"—and the

curate looked round disconsolately at himself, his friend, and the filthy dungeon. "Was the Harwich business likely? And yet I have a horrible suspicion that it was thoroughly medieval."

"Yes: but there must be *some* limit to folly and confusion and ineptitude! Would the Holy Father say such a thing, even if he thought it . . . that is . . . in short, however madly a tyrannous despot (such as I suppose the King of France probably to be) might rage against him?"

"All I know is, my neighbour seemed a very respectable and well-read fellow, and he assured me he had seen the document with his own eyes at the university. He said that the Pope excused himself by pleading he was no theologian, in the scientific sense of the word."

"Forgeries, my dear fellow, forgeries! Have we not seen already how easy it is for the most palpable lies to gain credence, in this age of few books and difficult circulation of knowledge? One would think you had learned nothing from all our experiences. Isn't the Bishop a better judge than we? or do you still cling to your Anglican contempt for episcopal authority?"

"I don't doubt the reality of that authority here," replied Rashleigh, wearily stretching his limbs in the damp straw. "Only . . . "

"Only your conversion is still too fresh for you to throw yourself heart and soul into the ages of faith. It is idle to quibble whether the Bishop be right or wrong in the abstract: the real question with him, as with the Pope, is less speculative than practical. The

Bishop believes with his heart and soul that the Pope has spoken infallibly. And the Bishop has power . . . my dear fellow, you say you have not forgotten Harwich."

"He has power to torture and burn us: but, if we are really Catholic in creed . . . "

"If? But who are you and I, that we should set ourselves in a matter of faith against so great a prelate—the Vicar, I may say, of the Vicar of Christ? It is the old poisonous leaven of private judgment that still works in your soul . . . Look here, I'll take you on your own ground. Look without prejudice at the quotations which the Bishop adduced, after the Pope, from the Apocalypse and from St. Bernard. If St. John saw the saints *under* the altar, still crying out 'How long?' surely it hardly looks as though they were enjoying all that time the beatific vision?"

"I own that did stagger me," replied Rashleigh, whom no sympathetic reader will blame for a readiness to find any good reason for reconciliation with the Bishop.

"To me, as I consider it calmly, it seems absolutely conclusive. But that is not all: the force of the scripture text is doubled, or more than doubled, by the commentary of so great a father as St. Bernard. What did your friend say to that?"

"He hinted that one was not bound in faith to believe all St. Bernard has written."

"What, St. Bernard! one of the greatest of the Latin fathers! My dear fellow, it is as if we had brought with us some subtle contagion of twentieth-

century Protestantism which infects even the Catholic minds around us here! If you are seriously going to pooh-pooh the definite interpretation of so great a Father . . . ”

“ I am very sorry to have said such a thing,” confessed Rashleigh wearily. “ But what really staggers me still is the difficulty about the intercession of the blessed saints. If, as St. Bernard assures us they are still under the altar . . . ”

“ It is indeed mysterious, but not more so than the unquestionably Catholic doctrine of Indulgences. The merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ suffice for the forgiveness of all sins without exception: and yet the treasury from which the Holy Father draws for his Indulgences is that of the superfluous good works of these same blessed saints, who had no good works except in so far as Christ’s blood made them good. If we allowed ourselves to be discouraged by such superficial difficulties as this, how should you and I be Catholics at all? ”

“ True,” replied Rashleigh rather sadly; for his friend’s arguments, however unanswerable, were hardly consoling.

“ That’s right! And now, when the Bishop’s clerk comes, as he promised, to ask our present decision, we may tell him truly that we have both come over to his lordship’s way of thinking—and, what is more, by thinking over his lordship’s own arguments. If my stomach tells me truly, it must be late already, and they cannot fail to come and see us soon.”

He had scarcely finished speaking, when steps came

down the corridor ; and in ten minutes' time our friends were in the Bishop's presence. The jovial prelate, goblet in hand, paused in the midst of his praises of the Blessed Virgin. He listened condescendingly to Father Duvet's humble excuses and adroit flattery ; and, being as placable as he was irascible, he called for two fresh goblets and a dish of cakes, discoursed learnedly for a stricken hour on the Lord Pope's opinion that neither the saints were in their final heaven, nor the wicked yet in hell, nor should be until the day of judgment ; and then dismissed his patient auditors with something more than the already promised dole of silver. Thus fortified within and without, they stepped forth with the prelate's blessing from the palace gate, and went on their way rejoicing, with their faces turned towards the mid-day sun.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE BROKEN REED OF AUTHORITY

THE prison of the Bishop of Rouen is several degrees less comfortable than that of his brother of Amiens. The straw is somewhat further removed from its first freshness ; the loophole a foot higher up and several inches narrower ; poor Rashleigh is chained to a pillar, and his fellow-prisoner this time is not Father Duvet, but a real Franciscan friar—or rather his corpse, for he died of gaol-fever last night. The gaoler, not knowing whither to look for his fee, has not yet taken the trouble to remove the body. It is natural, therefore, that Father Duvet, who has come again to persuade Rashleigh out of his ill-timed obstinacy, is a little impatient to be kept talking so long. The present difference in opinion between the two friends is, however, very simple. It happened most unluckily that the Archbishop of Rouen held opinions on the beatific vision diametrically opposed to those of his brother of Amiens ; and that the travellers reached his city on the very day on which news had come of the conversion and death of Pope John XXII. For that pontiff was now reported to have signed on his deathbed a very full and formal

retractation of the doctrine which he had held in spite of the King and the University of Paris for three years; and there was little doubt now that his successor would solemnly proclaim that same doctrine to be heretical, and its opposite the only true rule of faith in this matter. When, therefore, the energetic and orthodox Archbishop of Rouen heard that, in his own city, a wandering priest and friar had inadvertently admitted their adhesion to the now damnable beliefs of the defunct pope, it was natural that he should cause them to be brought forthwith into his presence. Here, in his own hall, the good prelate expounded the full scriptural and patristic proofs; but, though the priest readily confessed his error, the friar not only remained obstinate, but had even dared to reproach his companion for this ready obedience to the living voice of the Church. Nay, even after a night of prison, Rashleigh was still obstinate, and Father Duvet was already very angry.

“My dear Duvet,” said Rashleigh at last, “would you have me tell a damnable lie to get out of this place?”

“I have not deserved this insult, Rashleigh. I only want you to open your eyes to the plain truth.”

“I do my best,” said Rashleigh wearily, “though God knows these things are not so plain to me as they seem to you! You argued too well in the last prison. I cannot see the falsehood now of what you proved to me then.”

“To me, dear friend, my present reasons seem as much truer, as this prelate is a man of more holy and

Catholic life than the last. While I listened to that old man at Amiens, cup in hand, preaching that the damned should not see hell till the last judgment—heaven forgive me, but I could not help thinking how his wish must be father to his thought ! ”

“ And yet you seemed to enjoy the old sinner’s wine as much as I did ! . . . I can’t help it, old man ; it may be the defect of my theological training, but my faith is not so pliable as yours.”

“ You cannot see how, in the Apocalypse, the giving of those white robes to the saints under the altar refers plainly to their full glorification as to their *souls*—*i.e.*, to the full enjoyment of the beatific vision, even though they must await the Resurrection for the glorification of their *bodies*. ”

“ But how about St. Bernard ? ”

“ St. Bernard ? . . . What has St. Bernard to do with the matter, when once the Holy Father has spoken ? But let us stick to one point at once ; if the white robes of Revelation vi. don’t refer to the beatific vision, what else can they possibly refer to ? ”

“ I don’t know,” answered Rashleigh doggedly ; “ I only know that I can’t change my mind in an hour. Don’t stay any longer now in this vile hole, but come and see me again to-morrow.”

After a few minutes’ natural struggle between his dread of this plague-stricken atmosphere and his reluctance to leave his friend, Father Duvet withdrew, with the promise to do what he could with the Archbishop by explaining the cruel dilemma in which the late

John XXII.'s exercise of private judgment had placed them both. Poor Rashleigh watched his departure half-regretfully, half-contemptuously, and flung himself down upon the straw. It seemed bitterly hard that he, who had so far bowed his stubborn will, and even strained his conscience, to fall into line with what had seemed orthodoxy, should now find himself a heretic in virtue of that very self-sacrifice! But presently he reminded himself that no doubt all this was God's doing—a trial of his faith, and perhaps a chastisement for spiritual pride in the past—and, raising himself upon his knees, he remained long in silent prayer.

At last the door opened and a surly gaoler brought Rashleigh again into the prelate's presence. As they passed through the hall he saw two archers tying Duvet's hands behind his back. A third was plaiting three bowstrings into a very good extempore cat-o'-nine-tails.

"Isn't there a Bishopric of Gloucester in these abominable times?" cried the priest, gibbering with horror at the fate that awaited him.

"God knows!" cried Rashleigh, with less sympathy, it must be owned, than he would have felt a day before.

"Because I didn't choose to tell the Archbishop I had been ordained by the Bishop of Plymouth—you remember the fuss we had about that at Summerleigh. So I said *Gloucester*, at random, and he tells me there never has been a Bishopric of Gloucester, and they are going to scourge me for an impostor, and . . ."

The gaoler thrust Rashleigh through the heavy door, which shut behind him. The Archbishop looked as weary and worn as all good prelates had a right to look in the Middle Ages.

This prelate was none other than Etienne de la Marche, spoken of by admiring chroniclers after his death as "The Pattern of Good Life." Sprung from a knightly family, and imbued to the finger-tips with knightly feeling, he had thrown himself, while yet a boy-student at Paris, into a Franciscan cloister. Here he had risen to the distinction of Doctor in Theology, and had already made himself a name as a worthy successor of Aquinas and Bonaventura, when the King, in a moment of unworldly enthusiasm, forced the Archbishopric of Rouen upon one who, by all men's consent but his own, was fitter for that high office than any other in the kingdom. Etienne had now spent twenty years in the attempt to put down concubinage, tavern-hunting, and absenteeism among his parish clergy, and to reduce the monasteries to some sort of conformity to their Rule. In this he had fought, and was still for a dozen years to fight, a more desperate and uphill battle than any which his ancestors had waged against Norman rebel or Saracen unbeliever. Thick-set, almost ungainly in his figure, with a head too large even for his broad shoulders, and a nose almost of too manly proportions even for his huge head, he impressed even the most casual beholder with a sense of extraordinary bodily and mental vigour which his ascetic life had refined, and yet not impaired. At an age when most men in the fourteenth century

looked upon themselves as verging upon the grave, his thick, black hair was still untouched with white, and a pair of honest steel-grey eyes looked out with all the fire of youth from under his bushy black eyebrows. His voice, though somewhat harsh in ordinary talk, matched the straightforward vigour of his words, and even at times melted into a tone of manly sympathy which gave to his speech the mingled dignity and tenderness of a Hebrew prophet. "Stephen the Bishop was foul of face," writes a chronicler who had known him well, "but gracious in his speech as an angel from heaven." Rashleigh, starved and defiant, looked him straight in the face now, and felt that this Norman prelate was the first typical English gentleman that he had yet seen since that eventful night at Summerleigh. The Archbishop, too, looked deep into Rashleigh's eyes, and knew that he had here something very different from the sordid culprits with whom he was commonly forced to deal.

The discussion was not long ; no misunderstanding lasts long between two perfectly honest men. Rashleigh told plainly how much the late pope's theories had shocked him at first ; how they had seemed to rob his "Hail Mary" of all its grace ; how he would have been only too glad to repudiate them if he could only have been sure that he was not over-persuading himself again only in order to escape from prison. "For, my lord, though your prison be a place of little ease, yet I fear less ease still from a soul conscious of a daily lie."

"And I, my son, though I would willingly send thee

back to the cell, or to the stake itself, for thine own soul's health and the good of Mother Church, yet dream not that I ever touch or mar God's image with a light heart. It is a bitter cup. Daily I pray of my God that it may pass away from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as He willeth. But these are days of superabundant wickedness, my son, when all men (I say) see clearly that Antichrist is either already loosed, or presently about to be loosed. . . . Wilt thou then forswear this thine error?" added he, with a sudden change of subject and a glance that seemed to read to the bottom of Rashleigh's soul. Rashleigh fell on his knees without reply, and felt the old man's strong fingers playing with his yellow curls. "We will have no writings, then, my son—a word is a word between two honest men. Thou art bound to the court of our lord the Pope? What then is thine errand? . . . Ah, God in heaven, woman is indeed a burning fire, sweet poison, pitch that cleaveth if a man do but touch her hand. . . . My son, thou speakest even now of devotion to the Blessed Virgin; set there thy faith and thy love, that she may bring thee to her Blessed Son. Hast thou not heard . . ." and here the good prelate told two or three of those strange, unedifying Mary-legends on which the wisest men of those days dwelt with fond devotion. "But wherefore hast thou no grave brother-friar for the companion of thy pilgrimage? How hast thou fallen in with that hedge-priest?"

"My lord, we dwelt in the same town. . . ."

"Dwell no more in the same town with that man!"

The Archbishop's voice had grown harsh and commanding again.

"But, my lord, may I not plead . . . ?"

"Son, God has given me the gift to read men's faces . . . Heaven help me for what I read too often there! Can a man touch pitch and not be defiled? He hath lied to my face . . ."

"My Lord, our travail and our troubles may have turned his better judgment to unwisdom."

"Aye, son; half-knave, half-fool. We want no such clergy here; we have too many already in this poor realm of France. To-night he shall eat the bread of affliction and drink the water of affliction; and to-morrow we will send him under safe guard to the nearest port for England. . . . And thou, son, thou shalt go to the Holy Father's court as companion to Brother Maurice. . . . Nay, bow thy head as yet."

The heavy hands rested this time both together on Rashleigh's head, and for a moment he saw himself in his old school-chapel again, an honest but unconverted schoolboy, kneeling to be confirmed, and feeling only dimly that the episcopal hands meant something very solemn on his head. When he rose, and looked with moist and grateful eyes at the Archbishop, the great man's eyes were moist too, but all the more grimly defiant. "Son," he said at last, "thou hast a good heart, but a weak will at whiles. Thou wouldst fain find rest in this life; our Lord and Saviour found there no rest. Hast thou not heard that word of the Apostle Paul to his disciple: 'I have fought the good

fight?' Take that word into thine heart: 'I have fought the good fight!' and whensoever thou kneelest at God's altar, pray for me also, that my hands may be strengthened and my faith confirmed. God go with thee, son, for of this I am assured, that I shall see thy face no more."

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## CHAPTER XIII

### BROTHER MAURICE

BROTHER MAURICE was a good average friar of the third generation. He had spoken with men who had been intimates of St. Francis himself, and was always fully conscious of the fact that no Order had ever been so saintly, so powerful, so dear to the Blessed Virgin Mary, as his own. An easy-going optimist by nature, he never doubted that the same kind Providence which had called him from the world to the cloister, had also earmarked for him a comfortable mansion in heaven ; which, in the meanwhile, he was in no hurry to occupy. For this world is, on the whole, a fair world, especially in the eyes of a man well used to its ways ; and, during his thirty and more years of religion, Brother Maurice had seen as many men and cities as Ulysses himself, with perhaps some even queerer sights. He was never indifferent to sin or suffering, but he had seen too much to be easily surprised at anything. Like a good doctor or nurse, his mere instinctive loathing at the sight of evil had become blunted in proportion as his practical helpfulness had grown by experience. So Rashleigh could have had no better escort than this never-doubting, ever-ready, ever-cheerful little friar,

who knew by heart all the high roads in France, and was hail-fellow-well-met with every creature that crawled on them. It was from him that Rashleigh learned first, to his unbounded astonishment, that there was no Pope in these days at Rome, and that Avignon must be the goal of their pilgrimage.

Amiens, Rouen, Chartres, Orléans, Nevers, Roanne, over the mountains to Lyons, and down the Rhone in a boat to Avignon—it sounds like the heading to a chapter of Ruskin! They started at sunrise on a glorious late September morning, and travelled by easy stages. They lodged indifferently in castle or friary, farmhouse or cottage, citizen's house or stately monastery, as the whim seized Brother Maurice or as opportunity suited. Everywhere they followed the precept of St. Francis, and ate without too scrupulous question of all that was set before them. For, whether at castle or at cottage, they had seldom occasion to shake the dust from their feet and pass on elsewhere. On the contrary, they found the warmest welcome from the angel in the house, and often no less hearty hospitality from the good man himself. If (as sometimes happened) the master looked not too pleased at first to find that two fresh friars had come this week, and were in the act of devouring the very capon on which he himself had counted for Sunday, yet he was soon won over by the charms of Brother Maurice's talk, addressed himself with a good grace to the drumsticks, and brought forth a flagon of the best to enliven the after-supper talk by the fire. Here, as they watched the dying embers and applied themselves to the ebbing

liquor, he would listen half through the night to tales of ghosts and miracles which thrilled him with delicious horror, and sent him to bed in every disposition to accept with all faith and humility the good friar's blessing on himself and his house.

They reached the Loire at the time of grapes, and trudged for days and days among purple fruit and sunburnt vintages, with all that crimson and gold of the foreground, and deep blue of the distant hills, that makes a fine autumn day too perfect to leave room for the regret of summer and spring. Brother Maurice saw no special harm in that unrestrained merriment, and those twilight dances, which scandalised so many of his contemporaries; and Rashleigh, though somewhat startled by the freedom of medieval manners, adapted himself in the main to his guide's optimism. The two had not been long together before Rashleigh, tired of fencing clumsily with the more and more pressing questions of his companion, begged leave to make his formal confession in the next church they should come to. Here he told in rough, and as far as he could hope to be understood by a medieval mind, the story of his life. The good friar heard him at first with sceptical impatience, then with growing interest, and finally with that mixture of belief and pity which men accord to a madman's tale which is evidently earnest and has some elements of truth. He had no doubt that Rashleigh was in fact some concubinary priest from England, unhinged in his mind by the tardy but overwhelming sense of his guilt, and on his way now to obtain the Pope's absolution. Indeed,

whatever doubts he might have felt as to this main fact were set at rest by the Archbishop of York's instructions, which Rashleigh carried with him. As to the stolen Franciscan frock, Brother Maurice readily accepted Rashleigh's promise to enter the Order when once the Pope should have given him leave; and, meanwhile, what other garment was so safe for a poor sinner to live or to die in? He received the confession, therefore, with his usual easy charity; and, while offering his younger companion all sorts of good advice on his future conduct, he laid even more stress than usual, in their daily conversations, on the frequency and evil effect of those clerical failings. For, behind all Brother Maurice's optimism, there was just one subject on which he looked as steadily at the dark as at the bright side—and that subject was the faults of the parish clergy. A dozen times a day he was reminded of some scandalous anecdote from his own experience or from the report of others—as, for instance, that almost incredible tale which Pope Alexander IV. told to St. Bonaventura, and St. Bonaventura repeated to his brethren of the grey frock. Under almost every clerical cape—or, almost as frequently, under the gay lay attire which worldly priests commonly wore in contempt of popes and councils and bishops and archdeacons—Brother Maurice spied a potential enemy of the Gospel of Christ and of the Seraphic Order; and his dislike and mistrust were often returned with interest. Breaches of the secrecy of the confessional, abuses of the sacrament of penance for purposes of seduction, sordid adventures of all sorts, ignorance

even of that small stock of Latin which was needed to stumble through the daily services, poaching affrays, undignified quarrels about tithes and offerings ; on all these topics the good friar's merriment was merciless and inexhaustible ; nor did he spare the older religious orders, nor indeed any other order than his own. Rashleigh very soon grew weary of these scandals, which at first had amused even where they shocked him. He would gladly have disbelieved in them altogether, but Brother Maurice's proofs were so plain, and his own eyes and ears told him so nearly the same tale, that he could no longer doubt of the substantial truth of these things, though their constant repetition marred his romantic enjoyment of the journey, as the unfortunate odours of an ancient town are apt to mar our admiration of its architectural beauties. For the good friar little realised how much his own Order also lost in Rashleigh's estimation from many unconscious self-revelations at moments when he himself was chiefly concerned in boasting its superiority. The curate, who, in his Anglican days, had been very fond of modern devotional lives of St. Francis, and had indeed a little bored his flock by the assiduity with which he had harped on the Franciscan notes of evangelical poverty and holy joy, was now continually reminded how much ordinary human clay entered into the composition even of a typical medieval friar. The more easily Rashleigh learned to talk Latin, and the more persistently he questioned his companion on the many religious problems which presented themselves, the more it disappointed him to extract so little beyond

what the friar showed on the surface, and to everybody. Brother Maurice showed a certain familiarity with the Bible text, had always an explanation, however far-fetched, for such texts as he knew, and mingled all this with an extraordinary wealth of illustration from popular tales and miraculous legends, often not only incredible in themselves, but absolutely shocking to the moral sense even of later Catholics. Rashleigh thus learnt that the Virgin Mary is practically mistress of creation ; that sacramental confession not only removes the guilt of sin, but enables the penitent to deny with a good conscience that he has ever sinned—a denial which God Almighty is ready to back up, if need be, with as many miracles as may be necessary. It was strange, too, to notice how familiarly the friar criticised the Pope in an ordinary way, even though he would attribute now and then to the Papacy an authority not very far short of the modern doctrine of infallibility. It was only, in fact, by noting how common these two contradictory points of view were, even in the same mind, that Rashleigh began to realise those childlike inconsistencies of the medieval mind which no mere history can make clear to a modern reader. There was very little in his actual experience to remind him of what he had heard concerning the ages of faith from his teachers at St. Chad's. Day by day it was more clearly borne home to him that these worthy men had blindly mistaken the most enthusiastic devotional writings of a few picked men for the real average man's religion in the Middle Ages.

Still, the friar's good humour and cheerful trust in

God's providence were contagious ; and, but for one thing lacking, his journey to Avignon would have been one of the most delightful months of Rashleigh's trip. But to him that one thing lacking seemed now almost everything . . . he was sick to see his wife and children. The freedom from all past peril and conflict, the sunshine, the sight of all these happy faces . . . everything conspired to give him an almost physical hunger after faces so long unseen, and voices unheard. Not that he felt seriously uneasy on their account . . . there was little room for such a feeling side by side with his curious half-inarticulate yet ever-present conviction that all this was a mere outward show vouchsafed to him for a special reason. But all that he saw or heard was obliged to filter through this thought which floated ever on the top of his mind, and often came in a half-whisper to his lips—"What would this world be, after all, without *her* and *them* ?" Nor did it seem at all incongruous to him that in this strange medieval life he should take the friar's cowl and renounce all family ties, while looking forward all the more passionately to the sight of wife and bairns when this long period of probation should be past.

After a while they left the Loire and the now empty vineyards, and climbed by rough forest tracks over the mountains of the Lyonnais. At Lyons they joined a caravan of travellers on one of those great barges which through all the centuries have plied on the Rhone. Here the idleness of the life, without even the distraction of bodily exercise, left Rashleigh still more at the mercy of his doubts and regrets. First

in autumn mist, then in soft and silent rain, he sat for days and days watching the blurred, monotonous banks glide past: then came day after day of storm, during which the boat lay to and the passengers huddled together in little inns full of debaucheries which even Father Maurice found it hard to shame into some sense of decency. At length came clearer weather, but still raw and cold, which froze the friar's warm Southern blood and rendered him as torpid as a winter lizard: while even Rashleigh felt as though the boat were remorselessly drifting down to some inhospitable shore. In these past days, there had gradually grown upon him a feeling of moral dissatisfaction which his companion had been powerless to quiet. He realised consciously . . . what he had only been learning slowly and unconsciously hitherto . . . that Franciscanism, even in the fourteenth century, was hardly the Franciscanism of his high Anglican dreams. He had taken the enthusiastic but unhistorical panegyrics of Father This and Canon That too literally: and, the more exaggerated had been his pre-conceived idea of the average friar as an ascetic and super-sensuous bridegroom of holy poverty, the more deeply Rashleigh found himself now depressed by the visible facts. He could not disguise from himself that there was as little real asceticism in his present life as in that of an ordinary busy twentieth-century parson; and that those few friars whom he had met wasted with fasting or tied down to work in foul lanes and lazars-houses, bore no larger proportion to the whole body than those who in modern Anglicanism spend their whole life in

the slums. Their so-called poverty, he felt, was in many ways a sham ; though this was one of the few subjects on which Brother Maurice grew impatient, refusing to listen to the rare hints by which Rashleigh ventured to point the contrast in this respect between the Franciscanism of the early legends and this present life of theirs. Not only did he refuse to listen, indeed, but he also hinted not obscurely at the foul heresy of those hypocrites who denied the right of successive popes to smooth away the hardest points of St. Francis' Rule. In spite of this, Rashleigh knew very well that the only real privation to which his present life condemned him was that of the cold bath, bound up as it was with certain other inconveniences unavoidable even by crowned heads in those days, and doubly inevitable to monks and friars who lived day and night in the same clothes for months together. Yet even these (as he soon felt compelled to own to his shame), were inconveniences which he felt less and less from day to day. After beginning in the fear that he would never shake down comfortably into fourteenth-century life, his chief fear now was that he *would*.

## CHAPTER XIV

### MY LADY POVERTY

RASHLEIGH was still in this dissatisfied state of mind when the boat reached Valence, and moored there for the day. Here, as once or twice before, our travellers went up to the great house of the Grey Friars, where Maurice had many old friends, and where they found on this occasion Cardinal Vittorio Colonna and his suite, stopping on their way to Avignon with a friar whom they were taking to stand his trial for obstinate heresy. The two new-comers, as guests, were brought up to the high table for supper. Here Rashleigh was in a very good position to verify all that he had heard by the way as to the luxury and worldliness of the papal courtiers, and to marvel once again at the utter disrespect which the whole company showed in private for him to whom in his public capacity they looked up as to the Vicar of Christ. Especially offensive was the Cardinal's buffoon, a foul-mouthed, half-crazy creature, whose jests were flavoured with indecencies and irreverences so gross that at times even the most tolerant of the friars looked askance, and the Guardian was at last driven to rebuke the fellow sharply.

“ Nay, Sir Guardian,” replied the Cardinal, “ 'tis

but a poor crack-brained creature, who knoweth as little whereof he prateth as any jackdaw or popinjay of them all."

"Aye, aye," chimed in the fool; "thou wert safer be called mad, Sir Guardian, and rail on God and His saints, than be called a friar and seek to serve them after the pattern of the blessed St. Francis: ask my Lord Cardinal if I lie: and an ye trust him not, go ask the old patched frock in the prison down below this hall."

"Though thou be mad, my man," answered the Lord Cardinal, with a scowl, "yet forget not that a madman's hide can feel the lash as well as a Christian's. . . ." The fool found no answer ready; and a friar who had been brought to the guest-table in the middle of the meal put in his word of diversion.

"My Lord Cardinal, and ye masters all, with respect to this cracked fool here (real or feigned), it were scarce amiss to tell ye that which I heard even on my journey hither. There was, a few weeks ago, in the prison of my Lord of Rouen, a mock priest who had shown false letters of orders, and who, under trial by his lordship, was indeed able to sing mass after a fashion, yet so uncouthly diverse from any use whether in England, where he feigned himself to have been ordained, or in any other Christian country, that he was thereby convicted of imposture." (At this point Brother Maurice trod on the toe of Rashleigh, who, however, was all ears already.) "My Lord of Rouen would therefore have sent him forthwith across the seas but for some suspicion of heresy which he seemed

also to perceive in him. And while the Archbishop yet doubted (for there is no cunning like unto that of your true heretic) it so befell that the Friars Preachers, who had already burned many at Cambrai, came also to Rouen : whereupon this fellow, fearing for his own skin, straightway feigned himself to be stark mad, insomuch that even the learned prelate was deceived, and sent him (after the custom in those parts) to be cured by prayer and fasting at the shrine of St. Aïcaire. But mark ye here the finger of Almighty God ! There was in that same company of pilgrims a most furious madman, a clerk, who had lost his wits through overmuch study; yet not so mad but that he comprehended somewhat of what his companions said, who spoke of this English mock-priest as of a concealed heretic. When, therefore, the two men were set together, bound with cords, in the sanctuary before the shrine, and the whole day had passed thus without effect, the one still raving and the other still feigning himself so; at night, when all men slept, this mad clerk was by the spirit of God loosed of all his bonds, and moved to pile up round the false heretic priest his companion such straw and mats and movable benches as he could find in the church. The other bore this with all patience, thinking it to be mere play, and fearing to withstand his fellow-pilgrim lest thereby he should rouse his known fury. Then the clerk, fetching flame from the lamp of the shrine, suddenly set fire to this pile all round about: whereupon this heretic, after the manner of his kind, began to cry aloud for help, and the guardian awoke from his sleep. Yet mark here

again the finger of God ! . . . for that clerk, though a weakling in body, and no man of war by trade, seized on the sword which the guardian had laid by his own side, and drove off all that would have extinguished the fire, until the flames had done their work. And, what is more, no sooner had he fulfilled this just judgment of God upon his false fellow-pilgrim than he found himself loosed from the bands of that demon that had hitherto possessed him, and went forth from that sanctuary as whole in mind as any in this hall."

"By the Blessed Rood," cried the Cardinal, "that was well done of the madman ! What thinkest thou, Sir Fool ? "

"Truly, my lord, I think, as a poor fool, that master madman proved himself a most excellent Archbishop, and my Lord Archbishop a very perfect madman."

"How now, thou misbegotten rogue, my lord of Rouen a madman ? "

"Was it not even he who, a year agone, would fain have persuaded the Holy Father that the prime cause of the multiplication of heretics lay in the ignorance of our prelates and clergy ? Mark now yourselves by this example : what needs a bishop to know more of Holy Scripture than this mad clerk knew ? What needs he more than half a dozen words of good Church Latin to say plainly, 'Jacques Bonhomme, I hereby burn thee for this world, and damn thee for the next, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ? ' "

“Body of God!” cried the Cardinal, “the fool saith sooth! St. Francis himself converted not so many heretics with the sword of the spirit as mine own unworthy self hath done, with the help of that sword which our Lord, at His betrayal, gave to St. Peter, and which by St. Peter’s successor hath been deputed to me. Would the Blessed Saints Anthony of Padua or Peter Martyr ever have rid the country of Dolcino and his three thousand followers by the mere word of their mouth? Nay, it was as much as the Bishop of Vercelli could do with his ten thousand Crusaders; but thoroughly hath he done that work, nor dare any man now speak the name of Dolcino save with a curse. What boots it now to dispute with texts of Holy Scripture against lewd folk to whom we must needs forbid the reading of the Scriptures lest they should perish in their own fond conceits? Your Bible-preacher doth but film over the putrid sore of heresy with his seeming ointments: he flattereth with his reasonings that spiritual pride which lieth at the root of all rebellions against Holy Church: and even such as seem outwardly converted will nourish still the seed of heresy in their hearts. How say’st thou, Master Guardian? Had this foul ulcer ever broken out in thine own Order but for this new-fangled familiarity of lewd folk with the letter of holy writ? . . . which letter, as our Saviour saith, slayeth the simple soul.”

“My Lord Cardinal, methinketh that the poverty of St. Francis taught better than your lordship’s sword, even though we give no credit to that which is darkly

whispered among clergy and laity alike, how the sword of the Inquisition doth too often rage rather against the heretic's purse than against his errors ; and how gold is a safer shield than innocence in these days against the sword of St. Peter. We poor friars can indeed meet all other arguments of the heretics with words of Holy Scripture : but we are dumb when they point to that which we also see with our own eyes . . . the luxury of all prelates and the vices of too many. We see Lord Inquisitor going from place to place with some two hundred fellows in his train, who spread their drunkenness and debauchery over all the country-side . . . even as the huntsman of the fable, who did indeed rid the husbandman of his hare, yet who destroyed in one day more growing corn than ten hares might have eaten in a year ! ”

“ Aye, aye, Sir Friar, I have seen your poverty and envied it : I, whom men call Prince of the Church, yet who possess no palace comparable to this house of the Poor Brethren, nor any vineyard that yieldeth me one half of that silver which ye gather from within the narrow bounds of your cloister-garth. I am old enough to have spoken with your blessed Father Bonaventura in this very friary, while as yet it was but a hovel in comparison of its present magnificence—yea, and to have seen him weep bitter tears for sorrow of that luxury which fattened even then beneath the outward show of poverty in your Order. ‘ My brethren,’ I heard him say, ‘ have long sucked men's purses ; and now with the idleness of too many, their gluttony, the riches which they still heap up at home while they

beg in the streets for more, they suck at last the very blood of men's souls and destroy the Church which they should edify! 'Yea,' added he, 'I myself would willingly give this poor body of mine to be ground to powder if only I could thus bring back the Order to that which the Holy Francis ordained for it.' Thus spake that holy father, Sir Guardian; and ye, who have seen well nigh as many days as I, ye know full well how it hath gone with your order since he was taken from us."

"Far be it from me," replied the Guardian with a bitter smile, "to gainsay my Lord Cardinal and my Lord Inquisitor; yet, if I mistake not, we have even now in our prison a brother of our Order whom your inquisitorship findeth too obstinate in his literal following of our early rule, and who is like to burn at last for the erroneous opinions of holy poverty which your lordship would almost seem to share."

"Sir Guardian," replied the Cardinal, with some real dignity, "an the sons of St. Francis had trod more closely in their father's steps, many poor brethren might well have remained within the fold, whom their fellow-friars are now foremost in accusing to the Holy Office as pestilent heretics and rebels against our lord the Pope. It is not only cardinals and bishops against whom the heretics mock openly, so as that no text of Holy Scripture may close their mouths. . . . But enough of this debate, which was none of my choice, and which—like so many others which we deplore among us to-day—could only end to the scandal of the Holy Church. I note even now how yon stranger friar over

the board gazeth upon us with mingled pain and wonderment. If, as from his speech I guess, he is from that land of England, which hath ever shown itself faithful above all others to the Rule, he may well wonder in his soul as he draweth near to the city which, as we hear, his countrymen are wont to style in open Parliament 'the sinful city of Avignon.' Is it not so, Sir Englishman? Art thou not sad to see how quick is our Southern blood to boil up in wrath, and our Southern tongues to jangle of things which all men may think in Holy Church, but which no man should speak aloud? "

It was indeed an unlucky habit of my Lord Cardinal's that he always would have the last word. Rashleigh had, of course, been much struck, from the very first, by the utter want of ordinary English self-control and reticence even in England and among the pillars of the medieval church; and he had heard of, though never seen, the fisticuffs which solemn clerics not unfrequently exchanged within the very walls of their churches. But what had struck him even more, all through this conversation, was the callous indifference to great and essential principles, whether of Christianity or of monastic life, on the part of these men, who had no hesitation in torturing or slaying those who refused to tithe with them the mint and cummin and anise about which they quarrelled. His old Anglican ideas, often confused, but always heartily enthusiastic, about Christ and St. Francis, had fermented strangely for the last hour in his mind. Things that he had dreamed of in his walks from one sick

bed to another, things he had said from the pulpit to shame his congregation by the contrast between modern materialism and the pure faith of the Middle Ages, had now floated vaguely in his mind as he listened to this discussion. Here at last, then, at the Cardinal's direct appeal, the fire kindled, and he spake with his tongue; as frankly as if he merely thought aloud, yet as vehemently as if he were speaking for conscience' sake from his little Greenhill pulpit.

"My Lord Cardinal—and you, Master Guardian—I have oft-times preached to my flock how St. Francis chose for his bride the Lady Poverty, who for eleven hundred years had been widowed of her first husband. Yet, methinks, that here again, after scarce one hundred years, the Lady Poverty is in her second widowhood. Our Lord Jesus Christ had nowhere to lay His head: He and His Apostles had neither silver nor gold. . . ."

"What, neither silver nor gold!" interrupted the Cardinal, looking hard at Rashleigh.

"Neither silver nor gold, as I read my Bible, my lord." The old pugnacious Adam was now well roused in him; and he was in no mood to stand correction on a point of Scripture text by a cardinal who had already mutilated a saying of St. Paul's, and put it into our Lord's mouth.

"Nor any other possession?" the Cardinal bent his brows, and Rashleigh answered with still greater determination, "nor any other possession."

"Neither singly nor in common?"

"If not singly, why should they hold it in common?

We do indeed read of this in the *Acts*, but where can you show me any such story in *Gospel history*?"

While these rapid sentences were bandied to and fro between the two men, a whisper went round the hall like wildfire, and all that jovial uproar sank into a dead silence: two hundred jaws forgot to munch, and four hundred horrified eyes were fixed on Rashleigh. In his rash impulsiveness, the honest curate had fallen headlong into a heresy for which that age had almost less mercy than for any other. Fifty years ago, St. Bonaventura and St. Thomas Aquinas had stoutly maintained the absolute poverty of Christ and His Apostles; but here again Pope John XXII. had spoken; and there were now few surer roads to the stake than to agree here with those saints of a generation ago.

The momentary silence gave place to an equally sudden hubbub of voices. The Cardinal, sputtering with indignation, the Guardian, cold and ironical, a dozen Doctors of Divinity scenting a fine disputation, set all at once upon our friend. Simple, honest, and obstinate, Rashleigh stuck doggedly to his guns. The whole bearing of these people was equally offensive to his sense of justice and to his national pride; and, long before he realised how much he had said, he had already gone too far to leave any room for compromise. The Cardinal adjourned to the Chapter-house with his clerk and a few chosen assessors; and there the matter was threshed out in due form. Rashleigh was confronted with the usual arguments of those who tried to cut the ground from under the feet of the spiritual Franciscans by proving that even Christ and His

Twelve had not disdained to call some earthly possessions their own. When Christ said to Peter, "Put up again *thy* sword into his place," was not this the plainest possible Scripture proof that at least one apostle had enjoyed at least one piece of personal property? The Cardinal, who had himself played this trump card, was so incensed at the undisguised scorn with which the culprit treated such an argument, that he made short work of the rest of the examination. In five minutes Rashleigh was in a position to institute the minutest comparisons between the convent dungeon of Valence and the episcopal prisons of Amiens and Rouen.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE SECOND CRUCIFIXION OF ST. FRANCIS

I AM heartily sorry to introduce my readers to so much prison company, but at the time of which I write it was often easier to find an honest fellow inside the church dungeons than outside.

Last night, when Rashleigh found himself thrust suddenly into the pitchy darkness of this place, he had felt it like an icy bath. Cowering in the straw, first burning with righteous indignation and then shivering with the damp that seemed to freeze him to the bone, he had dozed only as one dozes through a night of fever. Ever and anon he had heard the clanking of chains, he knew not how many, and the murmur either of several voices or of one voice in several tones. In the morning twilight, he saw now a face that reminded him strikingly of his dear old tutor at St. Chad's. The same eyes, short-sighted, but burning with intense enthusiasm; the same stubborn, unkempt hair, the same irregular, passionate features which arrested the gazer's attention at once, and only left him asking "Does the face most attract or repel me?" Rashleigh so clearly remembered asking himself that question during the first weeks at St. Chad's, and hearing a fellow-student say, as if in answer to his

unspoken thoughts, “Satan might have made a big sinner of him; but God has made him into a real saint.” And here was just the same face before him now, except for deeper lines of suffering, a more frequent sprinkling of white hairs, and a look of sordid neglect begotten of this filthy dungeon. It was like a glimpse of his past life again; and a spirit impelled him to speak.

“Good Morrow, father.”

The old man started, and his short-sighted eyes struggled to pierce the gloom. Rashleigh came nearer and took him by the hand.

“Who art thou, son?”

“A poor prisoner for conscience’ sake, even as thyself, reverend father.”

“Aye, aye, another spy whom they send to take me in my speech! But I care not; I have no secrets from man; no, nor from God. . . . Yet thy youthful face and thy clear eye should promise honesty. Aye, aye, so thou, too, hast spoken for the poverty of Christ, and they have cast thee into this dungeon with me. . . .”

Rashleigh saw here a chance of answering the question which had exercised his mind during the past few weeks; how had the Franciscan Order changed so deeply in so short a time? Had Canon This, and Father That, and all the edifying modern writers whom he had studied at Summerleigh, simply drawn on their imagination? His questions soon loosed the old man’s tongue; for speech is a luxury after so long a silence.

"Thou wouldest fain know by what steps the spirit of St. Francis hath departed from us; hear then mine own case. I will not boast of that which I was before I entered into the Seraphic Order; suffice it to say that my forefathers were men of wealth and knightly rank in the world, and that men praised me for that vain learning of the schools, which bringeth no man to salvation. Yea, I may say with the Apostle that I was taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers; yet all these things are as folly beside the Cross of Christ. With my two brethren in the flesh, knights both in the world, I entered in early manhood into this Order; in spite of my father's threats and my mother's tears, we esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, choosing to destroy our noble house here on earth, that we might build ourselves a mansion in heaven. Moreover, even here on earth have I found my consolation . . . yea, in this dungeon itself He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the waters of comfort. Yet have I suffered as the Apostle suffered—perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, perils among false brethren. The body of our holy father, St. Francis, was scarce cold in its grave, before his false sons began to rage against his Rule and testament with a fury which hath grown with time. I have known Brother Nicholas, of Recanati, upon whose bare and defenceless crown these false brethren burned the testament of St. Francis, in cruel derision for the strictness wherewith he clung to its observance. I have spoken with brethren who were

present when the Blessed Antony of Padua was scourged to the blood, by Franciscan hands, at the very tomb of St. Francis ; and again when the Blessed Cæsarius of Spires was murdered by his gaoler for no other cause than that he clung too closely to the Rule. Yet what can such devils do against the soul ? They, too, have gone now to their judgment ; they lie in hell like sheep, and the raptures of the blessed in Abraham's bosom are all the sweeter for the sight of that worm that dieth not, and those flames that never shall be quenched ! It is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes ! Thank God, young brother, that He chasteneth thee now for thy sins in this prison, rather than in the flames of purgatory or the undying torments of hell ! Yea, truly may we say again, ' He maketh us to lie down in green pastures ! ' "

" But how camest thou hither, Father ? "

" Nay ; rather, how can any honest son of Francis dwell elsewhere ? . . . I made my profession, and spent my first years, among such as chose with all sincerity to follow in the footsteps of the saint, which were even as the steps of Jesus Christ on earth. Our hovels wherein we slept we esteemed less our own than the birds their nests and the foxes their holes : the whole multitude of us was of one heart and soul ; and if any would fain join us, he must first sell all that he possessed and distribute unto the poor. And now . . . "

" And now, even he who runneth may read. But how this change came to pass, we know not."

" Aye, but *we* know, who have watched this mystery of iniquity grow before our very eyes. The whole

world around us, as thou seest, is seated in wickedness. Within the Order, even they who were at first most strict have become tender to their own flesh in old age, fostering their broken-down bodies in the infirmary with forbidden meats and indulgences ; so that the younger brethren, marking the present indulgences of these their elders, and knowing nought of their past mortifications, have waxed more wanton from generation to generation. They vaunt themselves in a certain show of piety and outward ceremonies, while they have utterly cast aside the law of holy poverty ; esteeming gain to be godliness, compelling the simple brethren to defile their souls with the bodily touch of silver and gold, and thinking to do God service by shedding the blood of the saints. In all the friaries even of St. Francis' own province, the brethren have long since builded forbidden store-houses and garners, with cellars full of excellent wines, even as that rich fool of whom God said, ‘ This night thy soul shall be required of thee.’ And the spiritual brethren that would have lived as St. Francis bade us, with the labour of their hands or by begging their bread from day to day . . . these holy brethren would our latter-day Pharisees have constrained to fawn upon the rich for corn and wine and oil to be laid up at home in such store-houses of Satan. Among whom I also have been counted worthy to suffer: we, who have ever professed ourselves ready to render full obedience in all things permitted by the Rule, first to the prelates of our own Order and above all to our lord the Pope . . . yet all this hath availed us nothing. They have chased us like

wild beasts from place to place : even among the holes of the rocks where we would fain have served our God in peace. Me indeed they found not for many years : but others they took one by one, depriving them of their breviaries and the very habit of the Order, cutting them off from all sacraments of the Church, leaving them to rot amid the filth and vermin of these dungeons, and casting their bodies at last upon the dung-hill . . . yet in all secrecy, lest their iniquities should become known to the outer world. Me, therefore, they have now taken last of all, and torn from me the grey frock which I had of my master Angelo Clareno, and which I had myself worn these twenty years . . . yet, had they known it, they are but as Potiphar's wife, in whose hands I have left my outer garment while my soul hath escaped as from the snare of the fowler. For here, in this dungeon, the Blessed St. Francis hath clothed me with a habit not made with hands ; and daily at dawn the angels bring me the holy wafer of the Lord's body, whereby my soul is filled with ineffable sweetness."

"But what so grievous faults, father, could these men object against thee ? "

"What faults needed the wolf to object against the lamb ? Our bodies are at their beck and call : we have sworn them obedience in all things lawful ; and thereby they take occasion against us even in things most unlawful. What hath it availed us that Pope Clement V. heard all accusations against us, and gave us reason against our enemies, at the great Council of Vienne ? What did the Holy Father's own letters of

protection avail us, even before the perverse decrees of that heretic whom men styled Pope John XXII. ? Art thou from so far a land that thou knowest not that decree whereby this man revoked the express Bull of the holy Pope Nicholas IV., and made even the saintly doctor Thomas Aquinas into a teacher of falsehood ? Hast thou not heard of those sixty brethren whom he made to be taken and tortured at Marseilles, and the four who were burned like heretics for holding to the poverty of Christ and the plain Rule of St. Francis ? for when the Pope is heretic, then is it crime to hold the faith with the saints of old."

"The Pope a heretic ?"

"Aye, brother, hast thou never read thy Breviary ? Yet, as the doctors say, by the blessing of God it hath never fallen that one heretical pope hath followed hard upon another ; but whensoever one hath preached falsehood, another following after hath openly proclaimed his error, as we may see in the matter of the late John XXII. It may be indeed that our present Lord Benedict, whom God preserve, is that good pope foretold by Abbot Joachim and so painfully awaited these hundred years, who shall foster all true brethren and repress the false, and purify with axe and fire those clergy of our days who, in the words of the Holy Council, are worse than Jews. For it must needs be that such a time come at last."

"Believe me, father, there shall come a day when the evil shall no more have power to cast the good into prison."

"Would to God that they had no more power than

that, brother ! Thinkest thou that I care more for these chains than for the straw whereon we lie ? Flesh must perish, and we must feel the perishing thereof. But who shall heal this leprosy of souls, this leprosy of God's church, wherein thousands perish daily, devoured by evil priests in false confession, or by false pardoners from Rome with their penny-preaching, or by heretics without the fold ? But for this, I were no less at ease in this filth than in my mountain hermitage : for God and His angels know neither bolt nor bar, and with their converse the very wilderness of this dungeon may blossom as the rose. . . ."

" Little enough of the rose to my nostrils ! " broke in a voice behind them ; and Rashleigh turned to see Brother Maurice at the door of the prison, with his daily imperturbable smile on his face. " What say'st thou now, Brother Herbert ? For I am come to release thy feet from the stocks, seeing that thou didst but speak unadvisedly with thy tongue yester-eve."

Rashleigh was silent : but the old man's eye kindled with a light which showed how little his ascetic life had quenched the fiery spirit of his race. He was as a spiritual Don Quixote, whom this Sancho Panza would fain persuade now out of his high-flown fancies, in the name of common-sense and conformity to the spirit of the times : and Rashleigh, with all his liking for Brother Maurice, could not help noting the contrast. Besides, he was already quite familiar with the style of argument which the good-natured old Philistine now proceeded to advance, standing all the while in the

doorway with a not unnatural show of impatience to get the job done. The whole thing was very plausible, but very like poor Duvet over again: a subtle series of suppressions and qualifications tending to prove that black is practically dark grey: and dark grey not essentially different from light grey, and light grey morally the same as white . . . or by a simple reverse process, to argue similarly from white, through light and dark grey, to black. All this was reinforced, of course, by the same sort of Biblical quotations as Rashleigh had already heard about St. Peter's sword. As to the Rule of St. Francis, argued Brother Maurice glibly, it must be evident to all men that the saint used the words *money, poverty*, etc., not in the vulgar material sense, but in the theological sense, thus anticipating the interpretations of the Rule now given by late popes: so that the saint's express commands might be, and in fact must be, properly understood in an exactly opposite sense to that which they are apt to convey to the gross and unlearned multitude. Rashleigh listened dreamily to this, with the vague feeling that he had heard it all before, and that the very face of Brother Maurice was in some way a resurrection from his own past, whether waking or sleeping. The friar grew more impatient, more vehement: he launched out against the so-called "Spiritual" brethren . . . hypocrites, disobedient, sensual, oft-times even heretics . . .

"Lies!" cried the old man, pulling himself up to his full height and speaking now for the first time; "lies, the old lies that were shown to be false before

Pope Clement V. in full Council ; yet ye hypocrites learn them still like popinjays from your teachers, and repeat like parrots without a glimmer of sense. Why had your champions no proof to offer when the Blessed John of Parma made his defence before the Cardinals at Rome, or when Ubertino justified his brother-Spirituals at the Council of Vienne ? ”

“ Holdest thou with this old madman and his party ? ” asked Brother Maurice impatiently, but not unkindly.

“ Forgive me, father, ” answered Rashleigh, “ but I cannot hold with you and yours. ” At these words the other lost all his short remainder of patience. “ Son, ” he replied, “ it may be that three days in this cell will bring thee to a better mind. In three days, therefore, I will return and put the same question for the last time ; after which I must deal otherwise with thee. Thou hast doubtless not altogether forgotten a certain story of thy past life and errors. . . . ”

“ Told to thy ear under seal of confession ! ” answered Rashleigh, scornfully.

“ Under that seal, which Holy Church holdeth sacred for all crimes save heresy alone ; for, as the great Pope Innocent III. writeth, ‘ how should faith be kept with him who hath kept no faith with God ? ’ I have loved thee, brother, ” he added, with a sudden change of tone, “ as a companion, and almost as a son. . . . ”

“ . . . And I thee, father ; yet ask me not to forget that which mine own eyes and ears have seen and heard. ”

“ Almost as a son ; yet whom the father loveth he

chasteneth. And though Holy Church be ever merciful, and hate the death of a sinner, yet must she at times hand the obstinate rebel to be punished by the secular arm. In three days I will come again to hear thee further of this matter."

## CHAPTER XVI

DOUCETTE

THE old friar had fallen into an ecstasy again, and Rashleigh heard him muttering rapidly to himself about John of Parma, Ubertino da Casale, and other stranger and more unintelligible names. A ray of real sunshine came through the narrow loophole; it was evidently bright southern weather again for all who were not in prison to-day. The patch of sunshine made a sort of cross upon the pillar; at which the old man began to laugh and crow like a baby to himself, and dabble his fingers in the light. "Angels of God!" he muttered softly over and over again. . . . "Angels of God!" The genial ray stirred Rashleigh's blood also; he sprang with a great effort, hooked his fingers to the window-ledge, and drew himself up to look out. It was a wider loophole than any he had seen in prison before; he could just squeeze his body to rest half on the sill, and thrust his mouth and nose between the bars to get a draught of comparatively fresh air. At the sight of his face at the grating, a dark-haired girl put her head out of an exactly opposite window that overhung the narrow street and beckoned to him, with her finger at her lips. A moment afterwards she had

disappeared into the gloom of the chamber, from which, after what seemed an eternity to Rashleigh's impatience, she appeared again at the window, holding between her fingers a file, with which she made believe to cut imaginary bars. To this she rapidly tied a long piece of string, took her aim, and motioned Rashleigh from the window. He slid down: a moment afterwards the file came like an arrow through the bars and fell upon the floor, while Rashleigh rapidly pulled the string. In a moment he was at the loop-hole again: the girl clapped her hands in glee, and then, leaning out one moment as far as she could, and looking rapidly up and down the street, she hummed, to the tune of some old folk-song, "To-night—knock at the door." Rashleigh signed assent, and the vision disappeared in the twinkling of an eye; only, at intervals during the rest of the day, he heard the girl's cheerful voice as she sang over her work. Once or twice he climbed again to the grating, but no more faces were to be seen at the window.

The rest of that day seemed long indeed to Rashleigh. The greater part of this time he spent in trying to persuade the old man to escape with him. But the friar was inexorable. "I should but bring ruin on thee, my son; and they would soon find me again, as hitherto they have tracked me from hermitage to hermitage, wheresoever I had dreamed to serve God in peace. It is His will now that I should seal my faith with blood." After a time Rashleigh ceased to persuade him, and even began to work for his own escape without too much regret, for he could seldom

shake off a feeling of unreality about all his present life ; and this escape from prison, above all, seemed just like a bit of amateur theatricals. He waited till after curfew, and took every precaution his common-sense suggested ; yet he felt all the while as though nothing more were really required of him than to act his part plausibly. He sometimes thought he saw faces flitting in the gloom of the opposite window as he worked ; once a man came to the door and looked out. Meanwhile he filed away at his bars with more and more confidence and rapidity as the night grew darker and the wind howled more wildly, and in less than a couple of hours he had done his work. A last vain attempt to persuade his fellow-prisoner, and then Rashleigh bade him a hurried farewell. The old man clasped him in his arms and blessed him. "Thou, young brother," he said, "may'st indeed live by God's grace to see the good pope and the good emperor to come ; and when men shall have beaten these prison chains into ploughshares, or hung them up in memory of our sufferings, thou shalt bear witness to posterity that we died for no sordid cause ; and if there be still men who speak ill of us, the truth shall stop their mouths. And we, for our part, if God give us grace to persevere, will intercede for thee with St. Francis and the blessed martyrs who have gone before us. . . . How long, O Lord ; how long!" Rashleigh tore himself away, raised himself once more to the sill, and squeezed through the narrow loophole. The drop into the street was only five feet or so, and he hung only long enough to listen whether all were safe. He

seemed to hear voices now in the street. "Quick, quick!" came the whisper from the window; and the door opened stealthily ajar as he dropped hastily upon the rough pavement and staggered forward upon hands and knees into the mud. Something fell out of his breast and tinkled on the stones: it was his wife's portrait. He groped hastily for it in the dark. "Quick, quick!" muttered a man's voice this time at the door; "the King's Watch!"

"One moment!" whispered Rashleigh, groping still in the mud.

The voices were loud and near now, with a flicker of torches which flared round the corner upon the face of the house, and rendered all the more hopeless the gloom on this side, where the precious portrait lay somewhere in the mud. In a fit of reckless obstinacy Rashleigh brought out his matchbox, deaf to the now clamorous warnings of his would-be preserver, who at last closed the door with stealthy haste. Striking a match, and shading it as best he could in his gown, Rashleigh cast one hurried glance along the pavement; then a sudden glare drowned his own tiny flame, and showed the glittering silver frame only one pace away. To drop his matchbox, seize his prize, and spring again to his feet, took him just one quarter of the traditional moment: yet even so he was too late! A rough hand caught at his cowl behind; three or four evil-looking fellows were already round him, and in front stood a man with a drawn sword, which shone red in the torchlight. Rashleigh had no time for sober thought. Something in the grasp on his collar

behind reminded him of old days at Rugby football. With one shake he wrenched himself free and plunged forward, collared the captain round the waist, and banged his head upon the cobbles, while his sword flew away and clattered against the stone wall. The next moment Rashleigh had caught up the sword and struck at something. It felt first soft and then hard, like trying to split a block of wood with a nail in it. The sword felt shorter when he next struck with it, but the blow only knocked sparks out of a torch ; the rest of the torches seemed to disappear. He stepped forward again and hit out wildly. This time he trod on his own matchbox, which spurted out in crackling flame under his foot. But Rashleigh saw nothing of this ; he saw in its stead the light of forty-million torches, comets, shooting stars ; for in that same moment one of the watchmen's clubs had descended on the back of his head, while at the next his assailant had fled in horror from the devilish flames which his blow seemed to have struck out underfoot. There was a clattering of heavy boots down the street ; then no sound again but the sough of the wind.

Again the door opened furtively. Two figures came out and groped on the roadway ; stumbled over one body, which, after a moment, they left where it lay ; found another clad in a friar's gown, which they brought softly in, and left the street to the wailing of the wind for the rest of the night.

The disappearance of one or two of their comrades, and the tale which the rest had to tell of the friar's devilish prowess and the hell-fire crackling under his feet,

discouraged any future search by the King's Watch before dawn. With the first morning twilight, the captain strayed back to his guard-room dazed and swordless, covered with mud and unable to remember one single incident of the night. A few hours later the royal bailiffs officially viewed the corpse of Simon Podevin, and found what Master Thomas the Leech described as "a wound in the head, of two inches in breadth and six inches in length, and in depth even unto the brain; in which wound yet stuck the half of a falchion or curved sword; and of which wound the said Simon Podevin had died without rites of the Church." Then, when the evidence of the survivors had been taken, and news of the broken prison arrived also, nobody needed to enquire how a friar of this sort could have got his file, or disappeared so completely after the fray. There was one good old rule which saved much weary speculation about cause and effect in the Middle Ages: and no orthodox person in Valence doubted that Brother Herbert the Englishman had been in league with the devil, who had now carried him off.

When first Rashleigh was conscious of life again, he was in the dark: a kind of palpable darkness as of a black wall, high up on which hung a dim square light. Languidly and fitfully his weak eyes strove to pierce this gloom, until he fancied he could trace certain blurred hues of somewhat paler darkness, perpendicular or horizontal or sloping, which stood vaguely out against the rest. Finally, the square moon grew into some semblance of a window, darkened in

itself and heavily shaded from without, and dim also with the weakness of Rashleigh's own weary brain, like a glimmering square of casement to dying eyes. Dying, or slowly returning to life? He asked himself this question with but languid interest, and closed his eyes again to a heavy sleep.

He dreamed of his wife and children; it seemed that he had left them only for a moment, yet a moment so crammed with strange sights which he struggled now to recount; but a cool hand was laid on his brow, and a gentle voice begged him to spare himself: and with that the vision of his home melted gently into the reality of this soft hand and voice. He tried to collect his thoughts; but presently the same voice began murmuring a song . . . a strange immemorial lullaby in which he could catch no words, a drowsy chain of soft syllables to which he listened in a reverie that left no need for thought, until sleep came on him again.

When next he woke, he no longer doubted of life: on the contrary, he felt downright hungry. The same darkness was there, and the same dim high window. He was weary of that window. He tried to rise in his bed, but there was no strength in his limbs; his vain effort forced an involuntary groan from his heart. In a moment a girl's soft hand was again laid on his own; and to Rashleigh's eyes, as they strained through the gloom, her face was like an angel's from heaven.

“Where am I?”

“With friends. Lackest thou aught?”

“I am hungry.”

“Anon, anon!” The girl came back in a few minutes with light cakes of beaten egg and fine flour, and a cup of strong sweet wine. She laughed to see him eat so well. And now she answered all his busy questions. She herself was daughter of Gaucelm Garric, a fisherman of Valence; and the two together had saved Rashleigh’s life. They had carried him straight down to the river at the back of their house, and laid him in a boat, which she, Doucette, had rowed down the river almost till dawn. Then she had carried the unconscious Rashleigh across a mile of fields to the house of her uncle Arnaut, the farmer of Mas Latrie. Here in this barn she had watched him back to life. “For my father and uncle both,” she added with a little hasty laugh, “are brethren of the Third Order of St. Francis; and we have ever been friends to the Spiritual friars and foes to their foes.”

Rashleigh’s hard skull and solid brain had just managed to resist a blow which, even if it had not cracked his head like an egg-shell, might well have permanently addled its contents. His recovery was rapid now, but he was still obliged to keep in his hiding place, although he was allowed to see the light. Arnaut Garric was one of those thousands who, by their sympathy with honest but unorthodox folk, had incurred slight suspicion of heresy, and had therefore been forced to take the oath of abjuration; so that his name now stood on the long list of those whom any relapse might bring to the stake. He visited the barn oftener, and Doucette less often, as Rashleigh grew stronger, until at last the patient found

strength to rise and walk, first like a baby, under the guidance of his two preservers. Very soon, however, thanks partly to a convalescent appetite, which all the eggs and cream and fat capons of the farm could scarcely satisfy, he could stand and walk without help from any man.

Doucette talked much of her childless uncle, under whose protection our hero now was. With his wife, not long since dead, he had spent the last twenty years of his life in adopting and educating, one after another, the orphan children of the neighbourhood, for whom the good pair toiled as for their own sons and daughters. One they had even sent to the university: he was now an honoured priest, lifting up pure hands to God for those who had saved him from worse than death, and making daily mention of their names at the Sacrifice of the Altar. Now that his wife was gone, and he could no more care for the orphans in his own house, Arnaut spent all his earnings in clothing and feeding the needy. He would long ago have retired to some friary, but for the unhappy divisions which made it as hard in these days to save one's soul in the cloister as in the world. So too would Doucette herself, but her father, in the days when it was still possible, would not hear of letting her enter any of the nuns' convents in the neighbourhood; and the Pope had lately suppressed, as hotbeds of heresy, all the Béguinages save two or three to which only rich and noble ladies could now gain admittance.

“Believe me, Doucette,” replied Rashleigh, when

the girl told him this, “thou wert wiser to espouse some honest man and bring up honest children in these unhappy times.”

“Oh, father, speak not thus. What can a poor girl do in this world save retire from it and save her soul in peace? And what youth would deign to cast his eyes on a wretched suspect with her yellow cross?” She opened her cloak and showed . . . what she had hidden hitherto even from her new friend . . . the great saffron cross by which all “suspects” were branded by the law of the Church. “Why, the very urchins cast mud at my cross in the street; and my poor brother, finding that no man would hire him, fled to Digne and earned an honest livelihood in honest garments. Yet they found him there again after ten years, and now God only knows into what dungeon they have thrust him, if indeed he have not already cast off the burden of this flesh! Nay, sometimes, when men shun me, and the girls draw their pitchers aside from the fountain at my coming, meseemeth that God Himself must see my saffron cross and hate me too. In the very church, at my prayers, the devils will come and point to the blessed sign of salvation, and whisper in mine ear that for me and for mine it is but a badge of eternal damnation. For if God were indeed merciful to all men, and willing that all should be saved, could these Christians—and good Christians—be so cruel as this? Truly, father, it is with much ado that I cast such daily thoughts of evil from me, saying, ‘It is mine own infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most Highest!’”

"What pretext, then, did men find against thee and thine?"

"'Twas after the burning of the Holy Martyrs of Marseilles ; we too went thither, and brought back two of the holy bones; and when, within a short space after, the inquisitors and their sergeants came round in our country from house to house, from castle to hovel, compelling all men to abjure, then found they those bones in our chest ; and, but that we had sworn against our conscience that these friars were no martyrs . . . nor any other friars that die in these days for holy poverty's sake . . . then had our own bones been even as theirs. And therefore are we justly plagued since then, for that in a sense we have denied our God, like doubting Peter. . . . I feared not so much the burning: I had heard how those martyrs spake of comfort and faith at the very stake, like the three children in their burning fiery furnace : and methought their souls had gone up in a fiery chariot to heaven. But I was a poor, soft girl, holy father: and my mother had loved me tenderly, and youths at our dances had whispered to me that I was fair. . . . For I was fair in those days," she added wistfully, throwing back her thick black hair and searching Rashleigh's eyes with a pathetic remnant of pretty vanity behind all her anguish of conscience. He took her hand, and she was glad of what she read in his eyes, even while her triumph lent a keener sting to her remorse. . . . "And I knew," she went on after a moment's pause, "what those butchers make of the fairest limbs in their torture-chambers ; or, if they had spared me torment

as to a woman, yet I knew well how the gangrene of the chains eats men's flesh in their dungeons. And, God forgive me ! I loved my soft smooth flesh, and my vanity was more tender than my soul ; therefore hath He in His mercy given me daily penance in my vanity. . . . When the old companions of my dances are kind, they turn their faces away ; when they are cruel, they speak to me as to a *folle femme* . . . . and some cloisters are defiled, and others are closed to me ; and as the priest is, so is the people ; and how shall a weak girl save her soul at large in this world ? ”

Rashleigh's kind heart had long ago learnt true ways of comfort for penitents : and in this case there was all the added sympathy of a chivalrous soul for a pure girl in distress. Moreover, he wielded the spiritual power of a higher civilisation. He had lived and worked in a world where men have forgotten to treat each other as wolves for religious differences . . . in which the authentic horrors of the medieval Inquisition seem already a far-off and incredible nightmare even to those who have least reason to love modern Romanism. By the good fortune of his birth he could see at a glance over many barriers against which even the greatest minds of the Middle Ages beat their wings in vain ; his indignation lent him the eloquence of the heart ; and he dispelled her dark distrust of God's world with the easy conviction of a man who from some mountain top has already seen the Promised Land. The charm of his youth—for he seemed a mere boy among these dark-skinned people of the South—seemed to add something angelic and miraculous to the breadth of

his spiritual experience ; and every word opened a world of new thoughts in the simple girl's mind.

Spiritual friendships are proverbially dangerous ; and if Rashleigh thought no less of his wife and children for the next few days, yet it would be rash to say that Doucette thought no less of her father at home. Perhaps that was why she came so seldom to see Rashleigh now, and scarcely ever without her uncle. The worthy man would come and sit with his guest every evening when his work was done. He told his beads for an hour or two together while his niece and the friar talked theology, but seldom spoke himself ; for he was one of those heavy-bodied, heavy-minded men who grasp but few ideas, and have no words to express even these. Nine-tenths of his day was spent in trying to drive the straightest plough of the whole country round, and to rear the fattest oxen ; and all his other good works were done in the same stolid, inarticulate way. It flashed upon Rashleigh one evening how like this man was to John Watson, the old farmer of Green Hill, whose dumb and apparently unthinking acquiescence in his wife's active nonconformity had always so irritated our worthy curate as to make him fume daily at the thought even of their good deeds. He remembered now, with mingled amusement and remorse, how he had argued once with the honest man about his wife's indelicacy in preaching at the chapel ; and how vainly he had tried to clinch his argument with that Pauline text which the *Church Times* brings out with such pinchbeck dignity and such utter want of humour : " *We have no such custom,*

neither have the Churches of God." John Watson had puffed his pipe through it all with the simple indifference of a man who does not even notice that his opponent is angry; only shaking his head quietly now and then, like a Gargantua shaking the enemy's cannon-balls out of his hair. "Good old John Watson!" said Rashleigh now to himself; and the tears came into his eyes as he thought how sweet it would be to feel the bones of his fingers crunching again in the farmer's horny hand, and then to hurry across that half-mile of country footpath to the dearest little house on earth! He was very silent for the rest of that evening; and so was Doucette, for she knew that her uncle was going to lead the stranger away to-morrow night.

The old man looked up presently from his beads, and broached the subject. He did not fear on his own account; but it was not safe for Rashleigh to stay there longer, nor for Doucette, whose absence from home might already have aroused suspicions at Valence, "and in us, father, suspicion itself is a crime. There is a hermitage far off in these mountains, whither none of our foes have as yet found their way; thither will I lead thee after nightfall on the morrow; and there thou mayest pray God in peace for thine own soul, and for us too, that if God vouchsafe not to spare us the affliction of the saints who are gone, yet He may give us grace to suffer with the same constancy as they."

All next day Doucette kept away from Rashleigh, and the old man brought his food instead. In the evening, he asked after the cause of her absence. "She is gone on before to provide our horses," he

replied ; " we shall meet her by the way. Come, let us be going."

Rashleigh looked round for the last time at the barn where he had been brought back to life, and then followed the old man out into the darkness. After a mile or so, they struck upwards into a rough woodland path. Suddenly a curlew whistled in the wood ; Arnaut Garric answered with the hoot of an owl, and in a few moments they reached a glade where Doucette stood holding two horses by the bridle. The old man patted her cheek, and Rashleigh saw her eyes brimming in the starlight. She turned abruptly to him as her uncle mounted his horse. " Father," she said, with a tremor in her voice, " God be with thee and fulfil all thy heart's desire. Forget not in thy daily prayers Arnaut Garric, and Gaucelm, and his daughter Doucette ; pray for me above all, father, that my faith fail not ; and remember before God's sacred altar that He chose these weak hands to save thee from a cruel death." She knelt at Rashleigh's feet ; he laid his hand on her head and gulped out a broken blessing. Suddenly she rose again ; in a moment she had disappeared into the darkness of the wood, and Arnaut cried under his breath for haste, haste ! the time was short.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE EVERLASTING HILLS

RASHLEIGH and the farmer rode silently, as fast as the horses would carry them, through the darkness of that long winter night; up and down, in and out of the trees, but mostly upwards, and mostly through dense forest. Arnaut Garric was as silent as usual, and Rashleigh was given up to such thoughts as crowd upon us through a sleepless night. A new truth pressed upon him now which had long fermented in his mind, had first made itself dimly felt in his talk with the old friar in prison, and gradually at the farm had broadened into light. Now for the first time since his earliest serious ideas of religion at the theological college, he owned frankly to himself that there is only half a truth in the proverb, “It takes two to make a quarrel.” Equally truly may it be said that it takes two to *avoid* a quarrel. He, who had been wont to speak so bitterly and at the same time so thoughtlessly of the unpardonable guilt of schism: he who had often preached from the pulpit as if he wondered why all nonconformists were not swallowed up alive like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, saw clearly at last how an honest man may have no choice but between

schism and connivance at still greater evils. Indeed, his only wonder now was that men could have been so patient, and conformed for so long to such a system as he here saw wherever he went. For it was plain that the real article of faith at issue in these times was not "I believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," nor even, "I believe in the Blessed Virgin and all the Saints," but rather, "I believe in the Lord Pope Almighty." A man might believe in the same God, in the same tens of thousands of orthodox saints, yet become a mere brand for the burning by believing naïvely in half a dozen more saints whom the Pope affirmed to be sinners, or by clinging to the poverty of St. Francis after the Pope had bidden him go beg for money. And, as we are apt to read the Bible according to our experience of life, Rashleigh saw now with quite other eyes the mission of our Lord himself, and of that Kingdom of Heaven which He had founded on earth. He saw how the Son of God Himself had not shrunk from creating the bitterest of schisms within that very law which He came to fulfil . . . nay, that He had preached it as an essential part of His work, "I am come not to bring peace, but a sword." And yet (pondered Rashleigh) He said, "My peace I leave with you": thus leaving us to find each in his own mind the distinction between that mere worldly peace which He came to break, and that higher peace which He came to give. The false peace (he thought) lies in that mere outward unity which is so often born of empty lip-service and indifference and inbred habit; the true unity of souls

in God may at times be not only compatible with, but actually dependent upon, such breaches of outward unity as result when each man acts strictly in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience. Here, as so often, by seeking the cheapest way to save his soul, he might really be going the surest way to lose it. He saw clearly at last how there was more spiritual kinship between Etienne de la Marche, the reluctant persecutor, and Arnaut Garric, the reluctant rebel, than between the Guardian and the Cardinal at Valence, whose rivalries were silenced for a moment by their common desire to persecute the Spirituals, but who had no more real spiritual bond than had Herod and Pilate when they agreed together against Christ.

\* \* \* \*

The first grey of dawn showed Rashleigh that they had left the olives far below. They were now among broken mountain slopes, not so thickly clothed with forest but that white peaks glistened here and there behind, and patches of snow appeared even a few score feet above their own path; if path it might be called which Arnaut Garric's horse seemed almost to be making for the first time. In and out they wound around one buttress after another, but still bearing to the left: until at last a more sudden turn showed them a new face of the mountain, and the deep purple Mediterranean, bounded already by a broad red streak of dawn. There was now no longer the same need to urge on their tired horses; and Rashleigh left his to amble after its leader, while he watched for the first time, with religious awe, the coming of the daylight

over this southern sea. It came as Dante saw it from his mountain of Purgatory—the vermilion melting into orange, and orange into gold—until at last the dazzling globe peeped out, and the sea trembled with infinite points of light. Rashleigh's heart overflowed with gratitude at the sight; and his regret for the past was bound up with good resolves for the future. He had found no peace among these men; perhaps he himself had failed to seek it aright, and had missed the true lesson of this probation time. Here, at least, was perfect peace without; and the soul could plead no excuse if it failed to find peace within.

They were now among the snow itself, and turned inwards from the sea, following a huge cleft which grew narrower and darker until it became a mere chasm in the rock, with a thin ribbon of blue sky between the cliffs, and underfoot a shrunken winter torrent which allowed the horses to pick their way from shallow to shallow along its edge. The beasts advanced reluctantly in the half-darkness; and it was more than an hour before the cliffs opened out again. Here a steep path wound upwards from the stream to a tiny patch of meadow which nestled under an enormous wall of rock. A cross of pine-stems, ten feet high, was planted at the mouth of a cavern in this cliff; a tattered grey gown, patched with sackcloth, lay spread to dry in the pale sunlight on the grass. At the sound of the horses' hoofs, an old white-bearded friar came out of the hermitage; Arnaut dismounted and knelt at his feet, and was followed next moment by Rashleigh. Hither, then, had his soul been brought

like a dove to her nest ! Here he might live to God alone ! And, as he rose from his knees, he turned instinctively to make sure that no envious rocks or trees shut out the view of that purple sea.

Arnaut Garric divided his day between telling his beads before the rude altar of the hermitage, and sleeping like a tired dog on the pine-branches. Rashleigh, in spite of his weariness, followed his new superior in all his acts of devotion, and helped him between whiles to turn the stony soil of a tiny corn-patch with a rude wooden spade. Towards nightfall Arnaut arose, shook himself once or twice, took a few mouthfuls for himself and his horses from the basket of bread which he had brought for the two recluses, and kneeled for a parting blessing from both. For the first time in his life, Rashleigh felt ashamed to bless a kneeling layman, and longed rather to throw himself at the other's feet. His voice trembled and broke ; but Arnaut rose as stolidly as John Watson would have done, mounted his own steed, called to the other, which followed like a dog ; and Rashleigh saw them no more.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE WEARY BURDEN OF SELF

OUR hero had often preached to his flock the virtues of the religious life—*i.e.*, the life of monks and nuns. He had waxed eloquent on the fact that if a deeply religious man of the Middle Ages found it hard to live among his fellow-men, he could at least retire to some wilderness and commune alone with God. It never occurred to him, while he lived in the twentieth century, that a deeply religious man was at liberty to do exactly the same even in that soulless and materialistic age. For, after all, anybody nowadays can raise a passage to Asia, or Africa, or America, where he would find millions of square miles not less solitary than the wildest desert ever dreamed of by a medieval hermit; where he would need no daily raven, but could pluck his own simple food from the trees; and where no unworthy fellow-mortal would interpose between him and God. This men might do either singly or in societies, with priests who would provide every sacrament of the Church. Each man might thus ensure the salvation of his own soul; which, as Rashleigh saw very plainly now, was the first and paramount object of monasticism. And yet, although we

have among us many deeply religious men, deeply dissatisfied with their less religious fellow-men—although our modern Cooks and Gazes have their hands full of pilgrims to Rome and Lourdes—who ever hears of pious men taking to this, the one refuge of piety in the ages of faith? Is it that “the subtle poison of Protestantism” has at last brought even Catholics to St. Jerome’s opinion that solitary salvation was apt to be a mere “pious selfishness”? Or is it that, the thing being so far easier of attainment nowadays—since Protestants would be glad enough to speed such travellers on their way, and not even the Pope would dream of sending inquisitors to measure with their foot-rule the faith of hermits in the Dark Continent—is it that the dirt-cheapness of such a religious life nowadays has deprived it of its imaginary value in the past? Philosophers may devote themselves to explain why the main ideal of medieval piety should be so savourless now, even to men who in other things would so gladly put back the shadow on the world’s dial by five or six centuries. Rashleigh was not a philosopher, and yet, after four months’ honest trial, he thought he had found the cause. It seemed to him that what stands most between man and God, when all has been said and done, is the man’s own self. And, if he had been learned in monastic records, he would have remembered how these religious of the Middle Ages are recorded by their fellows to have suffered just as many perplexities in their solitary cells—to have doubted just as much of their salvation when they came to

die—to have undergone as exquisite tortures from the contemplation of the horrors of hell—as if they had been mere conscientious Protestants. So say the monks who wrote before Romanism was set (as Mr. Wilfrid Ward puts it) “in a state of siege,” face to face with Protestantism ; and so felt Rashleigh in his own person. He had fasted and frozen, laboured with his hands or groaned on his knees, for eighteen hours a day during four calendar months. He had mortified himself on Monday for not feeling the same spiritual exaltation as on Sunday ; he had mortified himself on Tuesday for having felt so soulless and rebellious during the mortifications of Monday. Wednesday morning he had spent in ecstasies of devotion ; Wednesday evening in the anticipated pains of hell ; the rest of the week had been passed in a dull smouldering gloom of mind and weariness of body. Next week the same dismal alternations ; and a little more dismal, perhaps, the week after. And all this was rendered still more bitter by the ever-present consciousness that God had put him into this Paradise at his own wish ; yet here by his own fault he pined in Paradise itself. At first, it had been his one consolation to steal out from between the prayers, or to raise his head for a moment from his labour, and drink in the sight of the mountain above or the sea below. Yet, by this time, he had grown positively to loathe the white of the snow against the sky, and the sapphire blue of the sea. For some weeks he had put aside with unexpected success the thought of his real home on Greenhill. Now the

longing haunted him, and seemed wrong ; came again, and seemed positively wicked. Yet again and again it came, at prayers or at work, or in visions of the night ; again and again he loathed his own weakness —or did he not rather loathe the religion which would make his past pure happiness seem so loathsome now ? —or was it ? . . . his overwrought mind reeled in the vain attempt to fathom its own depths, and to get behind itself ! Rashleigh was thoroughly sick in soul ; sick of living under conditions under which few souls are privileged to thrive ; sick to death of the constant effort of will which this unnatural and preposterous struggle imposed upon him. He began to loathe even the blameless ignorant old man his companion, to whose peasant's body and narrow peasant's mind this *sancta rusticitas* had long become a second nature. And yet, on the rare occasions on which the old man could be induced to talk, Rashleigh began to feel some glimmerings of humanity again.

Father Ugo was, of course, a Joachite ; every spiritual Franciscan was more or less of a Joachite. The ordinary conventuals were comfortable enough as they were ; their ideal city, as expressed by one of the best of them, was one “wherein a hundred Brethren Minor might live in comfort and decency, supplied with every necessary in abundance.” But the more earnest natures could not shut their eyes to the spiritual and moral bankruptcy of the Middle Ages, a bankruptcy made all the more startling by the rapid degeneration of those sons of Francis and Dominic, who had seemed likely, for one brief generation, to

bring with them a new heaven and a new earth. That strange "Calabrian Abbot Joachim, endowed with prophetic spirit,"<sup>1</sup> who had been patronized by three popes, although his speculations in their logical conclusions were almost anti-Christian, was the author of a truly medieval theory of development. Starting from the same point which lends so vivid an interest to many of St. Bernard's greatest writings—the utter corruption of the medieval world, and especially of the clergy—Joachim argued that these times must be the Last Days of the Apocalypse; that Antichrist must be at hand; that only one more era was yet to come before the end of the world. The Jews had lived in the era of God the Father, of the Old Testament. Hitherto, Christians had lived in the era of God the Son, of the New Testament. Henceforth should be the era of the Holy Ghost,—of a new yet primeval doctrine proceeding from the Old and New Testament as the Holy Ghost proceeds from Father and Son. Not that one jot or tittle of the Scriptures should pass away, but that men's eyes should now be opened to read them all in a fresh and more sublimely mystical sense—the sense of the Everlasting Gospel spoken of by St. John. This, then, should be the Last Age, the Reign of the Saints, in which there should be no more lay folk, and even no more parish clergy; the whole world should be inhabited by a race of cell-bound anchorites serving God in lonely contemplation. As Rashleigh learnt this doctrine, little by little, from his

<sup>1</sup> Dante, "Paradiso," xii., 140.

companion, he saw clearly what comfort such an "Everlasting Gospel" offered to the persecuted Spirituals. To those men, on whom the moral squalor of their own times pressed most remorselessly of all, nothing could be more consoling than an assurance that the present was simply the darkest hour before the dawn. Again, to men who suffered every day for righteousness' sake, that was indeed a gospel which promised the approaching reign of the Latter Day Saints.

It seemed to Rashleigh, as he listened day after day to these strange speculations, that he might be able to give his friend the benefit of his own modern experience. After all, history has plainly shown that, to enjoy undisturbed communion with God, men need not become hermits and retire into the desert. On the contrary, it is just where men grow thickest, and the world is busiest, that the greatest liberty of private worship is permitted in modern times ; since, within reasonable limits, there is nothing that teaches man forbearance so effectually as a system which compels him to rub off his angles against those of his fellow-men. Something of this kind Rashleigh now suggested to his friend, taking care, however, to throw it out only as a somewhat Utopian idea, which, however impossible for the present, might conceivably be realised in some far-off age. He was amused to find how scandalous, even in this tentative form, his suggestion appeared to the poor old man.

"Nay, 'the reign of Christ's saints must needs be a reign of hermits,' saith the Blessed Joachim ; of

solitary hermits such as thou and I. Only thus can man search out the living spirit of the Holy Scriptures, for where many men are gathered together, there do they ever jangle of the letter alone, which killeth the soul, puffing up, leading to disputations through the imperfection of human language and human intellects ; and from disputations to fightings and persecutions of the saints ; since, as the Wise Man saith, ‘the number of fools is infinite and the saints are but few.’ ”

“ Yet by long use and custom, father, men might learn to suffer even such opinions as they might not approve.”

“ Doth the wolf learn sufferance of the lamb ? Wilt thou preach patience to the raging sea, or charity to these heretics that swarm by thousands in our unhappy days, denying the Blessed Virgin and the saints, doubting of God Himself, and under a cloak of strict virtue practising in secret the most inhuman abominations ? Have such men ever shrunk at need from defending their foul doctrines by force, and could true Catholics suffer patiently their multiplication ? Nay, rather must we smite them as the Israelites smote Amalek, with the edge of the sword. But the mystery of iniquity shall shortly be revealed, and Antichrist shall do his work ; the wicked shall multiply, and make themselves drunken with the blood of the saints, until a good pope shall come, canonically elected, pure of his body, learned in the Scriptures ; and with him an emperor who shall love justice and hate iniquity ; then shall these two go forth conquering and to conquer, and break the wicked

like a potter's vessel. Yet, how long, O Lord, how long?"

"It may be, father, that God's times are longer than we think, and His working less evident to our imperfect senses; neither in the storm nor in the flame, but in the still small voice. By much study men grow slowly wiser, and by the growth of learning in our schools . . . ."

"Growth of learning? Thou knowest not our schools: full of vain jangling and pride, yet more and more empty of true learning. The heathen philosophers, as we read, lived in temperance and chastity, and therefore was all wisdom revealed to them save only the Gospel of Christ, which was kept back until the fulness of time; but in our schools, where most men's minds are overclouded by the mists of their foul vices, and where even the best are distracted by the riotousness of the greater part, how should true learning fail to dwindle from day to day?"

"But if, in the slow process of time, teachers were multiplied, and with teachers books, so that every priest or clerk might have his own copy of the Holy Scriptures,—nay, and at last even the poorest might possess and read the Word of God,—wherefore then should men need to withdraw into the wilderness for communion with Him?"

"All shall indeed read the Word of God when the saints possess the earth; for the saints are few: and who knoweth how few in those days shall have persevered through all tribulations and remained faithful

to the end ? But, for the common herd, thou wert as well to dream that the earth should bear her fruit unbidden, and the streams run wine ! ”

“ All things are possible to God, father.”

“ Aye, son, yet are not all things therefore expedient : and specially must we commend His wisdom Who hath refrained from making His mysteries too familiar to the gross and vulgar herd. Yet it may be that, with the coming of Antichrist, this plague shall also be let loose, to the destruction of the world. For bethink thee one brief moment, young man, of that which we see around us already ; and from these things consider that which shall be. With what care do the holy synods and councils command us to keep under lock and key the blessed wafer of the Lord’s Body, and the chrism oils, and the consecrated water in the font ! yet how often, in spite of this, doth the negligence of our priests leave these holy elements a prey to devilish sorcerers ; who, abusing the sacraments of God to their own and others’ damnation, make thereof love-charms and secret poisons—nay, and have even sprinkled the Lord’s Body like dung to fertilise their fields. And if God in His wrath should one day permit that all the vulgar lay-folk have free access to these and other of His mysteries . . . ”

“ Yea, father ; yet, such heretics as have no faith in these holy sacraments, how should these care to abuse for abominations of sorcery things wherein they see no sacred efficacy ? ”

“ Then were the state of the world ten times worse. For bethink thee, son, what miracles of vengeance are

wrought, even in these times, by saints in their wrath for the desecration of a single relic."

"Aye, father," replied Rashleigh, remembering Brother Maurice's interminable stories.

"And by the Blessed Virgin," pursued the old man, "against all such as despise the majesty of her glory; and above all by the Lord her Son for the desecration of His blessed Body in the Host! Hast thou not heard of that peasant woman who, having crumbled the Lord's Body over her cabbages, against the ravages of the palmer worm, was smitten forthwith with an incurable palsy? Or of those Jews at Paris, who, stealing the Blessed Wafer, transfix'd it with their knives, whereupon It spurted forth blood; and, the thing becoming known to the faithful, there were slain on that day, and in that one city, sixteen thousand Hebrews! Nay, and many times since then have bleeding wafers been found at the doors of these infidels, so that the Christian folk have slain man, woman, and child, and despoiled their goods. If God and His saints so show forth their wrath at the desecration of one Host, or of one sacred relic, what think ye of a world wherein these most holy things should be daily despised? Nay, first must come the end of all things, even as the blessed brethren saw in a vision scarce a hundred years agone: how the heavens were opened, and Christ was set in judgment, ready to smite the world to pieces at one stroke, had not the Blessed Mary, in her womanly mercy, pleaded sore and long for mankind, that she might first be permitted to send her two servants, Francis and

Dominic, to turn men's hearts to God: and thus for that time was the world saved. Seeing, then, that Christ in His indignation is ever ready to smite the world for its sins but for the daily intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the saints, what then must come to pass, think ye, when all the saints, forgotten and despised of the most part of mankind, should rather plead to Him in wrath to hasten His judgment?"

Rashleigh was startled by such inexorably logical reasoning from such natural medieval premisses, and hastened to divert the old man's thoughts. "But, father, God is more than the saints; and no truth is hid from His eye. If, therefore, as ye say, when all mankind shall live to His service, each apart in his own desert hermitage—if then God's eye shall embrace them all together at the same moment as one and the same Church, keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, why, then, do we now set bounds to His power? Were it not as easy for Him to see likewise all His elect, under whatsoever name they be called, and under whatsoever guise they worship Him, as One Holy Church, bound together by the unity of the Spirit?—Romans and Greeks, yea, and even . . ." Modern Catholic teaching would have authorised Rashleigh to add, "and even heretics," but here he prudently stopped short; and even so the old man broke in warmly:

"Nay, that were schism and sheer heresy, destructive of charity, and therefore hateful in God's sight. Yet He only knoweth how oft the devil hath tempted me to these same thoughts, as I muse upon these

times of ours and upon God's infinite long suffering. But it is His own Spirit that withheld me from that error, by showing me the indelible wickedness of man, whereby His mercy is of necessity turned to pitiless justice. For if it were possible that men could live at peace with each other in this world, separated outwardly into divers Churches, and yet preserving the unity of the Christian spirit—or if at least those men whom God hath not touched with His grace to save their own souls could leave the true religions to save theirs in peace and quietness—if men could live throughout this world as I have seen with my own eyes among those quiet mountains of Calabria—Roman, and Greek, and Basilian, yea, even Jew and pagan, following each the rites of his own faith without let or hindrance to others—then indeed might thy vain dream be true. But thou art young: thou hast not seen the great world as I have seen it: all Italy have I travelled on foot, and many parts of the realm of France; and I have spoken at one of our convents with Ser Marco Polo, and seen and touched that unicorn's horn which he brought back with him from the great Khan of Tartary—and ever I have found, save in that small and peaceful country of my birth, that each Christian is as a wolf to his fellow-Christian. In truth, son, after my three-score years and ten of life, I doubt only this one thing, whether the rich be more merciless to the body of the poor man, or whether the prelates and priests be more cruel to his immortal soul."

"And yet, father, how many men's souls rise to

God above all the wickedness of this visible world ; so that while all outward things on earth seem to cry aloud in our ears, ‘ Bow down and worship the Lord Devil who hath created us ! ’ yet the soul crieth all the more, ‘ Nay, but I bow to the Lord God, who hateth evil, yet suffereth evil, we know not wherefore.’ Ten thousand such there be who have never bowed the knee to Baal, but whose souls, rising in faith to God from divers lands, know each other as brethren in Him. Doth He not then see them all for His own ? Are they not His Church here on earth ? Doth not the Spirit, with groanings that cannot be uttered, teach all such to leave jealousy and self-will, and to dwell together in the unity of peace ? Doth He not thus prepare them for the contemplation of His Spiritual Church—One and Catholic above all those diversities of faith which, so far from ceasing, do but multiply as the ages roll on ? Nay, even among seeming heretics——”

“ Peace, son, peace ! ” And the old man spat vehemently on the floor ; “ thou know’st not the heretics as I know them. I too, when I was yet young in religion, besought the Lord instantly and with prayers that He would spare me in this matter. For I saw them sober and pure in their outward lives, fathers and mothers of families, zealous to all appearance in their religion, hating all oaths and unseemly jests, and ever greeting each other with the words ‘ Blessed be Jesus Christ ! ’ Yet when I heard how these same men, after they had been put to the question, on the rack or otherwise, confessed to such things as

it is a shame even to speak of: when I noted how, even when they dared go to the stake for their errors, they faced the flames rather in a spirit of fierce folly or sullen silence than with such smiles and songs of praise and rapturous joys of heaven as we read of in all the legends of the true martyrs; above all, when I saw that their sects died out under the rack and the stake—slowly indeed, yet surely, as our inquisitors go from village to village—then at last understood I the end of these men: how God hath put them in slippery places, and in a moment they go down to hell. For, as the holy Fathers teach us, it is ever the property of the Catholic faith to increase under persecution, and of your heresy to die away. Wherefore, having once learned by these certain tokens the abominations of heresy: considering further that no heretic can avoid eternal damnation; I saw then that such as taught those doctrines must needs be very devils in human shape, seeking to drag with them to hell those souls whom Christ died to save: and thus, for pure pity of Christ's love and bitter death, I learned to be pitiless to Belial."

"But *must* all heretics needs be damned, father?" pleaded Rashleigh, remembering indeed that such a doctrine had been preached by a modern convert in the fervour of his recent conversion, but remembering also the outcry of more tolerant or discreeter Romanists, who have now receded from what was practically the universal medieval opinion on this question. The old man stared at him now with a face in which horror and astonishment were so grotesquely mingled, that

Rashleigh hastened to put his thought into another form. "And if I told thee, father, of nations here in Europe who for nigh four hundred years past have cut themselves off utterly from the Pope—occupying vast territories, multitudinous in numbers and multiplying still like locusts from year to year—nations more law-abiding, more prosperous, than any Catholic land hath ever been . . . "

The old man spat again, and answered yet more hastily: "Young man, put away from thee these devilish temptations: subdue thy flesh with fasting; pray more fervently; above all things call the Blessed Mother of God to thine aid whensoever the Evil One tempteth thee with such blasphemies against the gospel of her Son. Hath not our Lord sworn to reward the faithful tenfold in this life, and yet more in the life to come? How then should such wolves, such devils in human shape, enjoy that peace and plenty which have never yet been granted to good Catholic folk?"

"Father," said Rashleigh in a firm voice, determined now to explain himself clearly, "I myself was not born in this land, but came hither in a manner against my will. I was born, baptised, and bred, amongst such as thou namest heretics,—nay, hear me out this one time—men who from father to son own no authority of the Pope; the clergy indeed owing allegiance to their bishops" (here he blushed involuntarily at his own words), "but the greater part of the laity admitting no controlling power in matters of faith beyond the power of God Himself in each man's conscience. Those men live in a peace and freedom such as thou,

father, canst not dream of: in those lands there is no bondservant, nay, nor hath been these three hundred years past. War, indeed, is not unknown; yet thou dreamest not how seldom and with how little cruelty, in comparison of these times! The husbandman hath there a breathing-space to till his lands in peace, unvexed by the extortions of his lord or the barbarities of a foreign soldiery. In that land, every man who will may have his own book of the Holy Scriptures, without money and without price: yea, and the poorest child hath free access to such learning as would make the greatest clerk of these times turn pale with envy. Of religion and of Holy Church men study and speak at their own will; albeit the rash speech of some may breed such wordy warfare as thou knowest here also, yet is no man so bold as to lay a finger on his neighbour's body or goods for religion's sake—nay, not the King himself. So great is the peace and purity of that land in comparison of this, that men have long since learned to doubt of the wickedness of priests and monks as of an evil dream that is past: and a man may gain much gold, if he will, by writing that these things, which we see here with our own eyes, have never been! Yet is there among them a mighty remnant of Catholics that still show obedience to the Pope—lambs, say'st thou, in the midst of wolves? Nay, with a voice far beyond their numbers or deserts in the great Parliament of the nation, and enjoying a peace so profound that when the King, for once only in his lifetime, must insult them by a public abjuration of their doctrines, it seemeth to them an evil too intolerable to

be borne by mortal man, even as the delicate princess of the old wives' fable could not sleep for a single pea that lay beneath her nine feather-beds ! Moreover, this Catholic remnant is suffered to preach publicly and unharmed such words as, were any half so bitter spoken against the greater part of the folk of any Catholic land, the speaker should dear abide it. Moreover, though the heretics of this land be more careful of the churches than were the Catholics who built them—for they are most loth to defile them with spitting, or the presence of dogs or hawks, or such foul merriment as thou and I have seen within the sanctuary—yet from these same churches, three hundred years and more agone, they cast out upon the dung-heap all relics of saints, and broke down their images, dwelling thenceforth without more care of the Church's saints than of other holy men, paying no worship to the Blessed Virgin, and esteeming it very idolatry to adore even the consecrated wafer of the Lord's Body."

Hitherto, the friar had seemed unable to collect his thoughts, and looked doubtful how far Rashleigh was in earnest, or how his words were to be understood. But now, grasping him by both arms, he hissed out, face to face : " And thou wert bred among such men ? "

" Father, I was of them ; nay, I *am* of them, and ever shall be."

The old man thrust Rashleigh violently from him, and, seizing the bowl of holy water, cast it in his face. Then, snatching a crucifix, he bade him disappear to the hell whence he had come. To his unspeakable

dismay, Rashleigh only wiped the holy water from his face and said, in a quiet, human voice, "Forgive me, father, but my words are truth." The friar sank breathless into a corner of the cave, glaring with wild eyes that shone out from the darkness like a cat's, and Rashleigh stepped forth into the fresh air. The sun had not long sunk into the sea; there was an honest English-looking afterglow with broken clouds; for almost the first time since that fatal scene in Findlay's room he now felt thoroughly at peace with himself. He would afflict the old man no more with his presence, but spend the night pacing their narrow terrace outside, and next morning go down to the nearest town and give himself up and make an end of it. For he had no longer any doubt that this was the end to which the finger of Providence had pointed all through this strange time of trial.

## CHAPTER XIX

### BITTERNESS OF DEATH

AFTER all, Rashleigh's resolution was unnecessary, for a hunter had come by chance a few days since upon the cross which marked their hermitage, and had thought to do God service by reporting to the Bishop that he had found what was no doubt a lurking-place of some heretical anchorite. That very evening armed men beset the only issue from the cave, and Rashleigh, on entering the gorge at daybreak, met his captors halfway.

"Is thy fellow above in the cave?" they asked.

"He is a true Catholic, my masters; it's I who am the heretic."

"Aye, heretic, no doubt; but Catholic, that we shall see anon."

A few minutes afterwards the old man himself appeared with his hands bound and a rope round his neck; nor were the guards in the least impressed by the fact that he refused to be dragged within touching distance of Rashleigh, at whom he spat and swore like a wild cat. They had seen so many tricks of that sort! If they were to let off all who, finding themselves caught, claimed to be true Catholics, who then

should be burned? Besides, Father Ugo was well known for a recusant, a Spiritual friar who, to avoid taking the oath of abjuration of Christ's poverty, had fled from his convent just before the inquisitors' visit. So he and Rashleigh were now bound each to a trooper's stirrup and dragged down to the town, where, despite the insults of some of the rabble, Rashleigh was encouraged by the evident sympathy of the better sort. They were indeed an interesting pair, and the sober burghers of La Rocca were already somewhat weary of these executions for an abstract question, in which the persecuted party showed so great humility and self-denial. Moreover, the episcopal cities of the Middle Ages were not as a rule centres of loyalty to the Church.

The old man was spared torture in pity for his white hairs and in consideration of his free confession of the principal charges. Rashleigh again confessed freely to such utter disbelief in the most fundamental Romanist doctrines that there was no excuse for torture in his case; besides, the Inquisitor and the Bishop of La Rocca happened to be naturally humane men. However, being also men of high-strung faith, they must needs try every means in their power to persuade the two to recant and save their souls, and they knew by experience that no means was so effectual to persuade recantation as a long term of solitary confinement on bread and water in such dungeons as the Inquisition had prepared for its victims. Just at first the Bishop himself came almost daily to argue with Rashleigh, and even though our hero had had no

previous experience to the same effect, the episcopal apologist's well-meant arguments were by themselves sufficient to undermine the house of cards which he was struggling to build up. Rashleigh saw so clearly now how, in spite of theoretical reservations, the Catholicism of the Middle Ages amounted practically with most men to a blind belief in the Pope. The common people, as Father Ugo had long ago told him, would state it sometimes in so many words—"Believe in the Pope, and save your soul!" Within one short generation thousands had become heretics for believing, as St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventura had believed, about the poverty of Christ; thousands more, but for the French King's readiness to humiliate John XXII. for purely political reasons, would have followed the great English divine, Thomas Walleyes, to prison for maintaining against the Pope that doctrine of the Beatific Vision which is now an infallible dogma of the Roman Church. In the face of all this, all the childish arguments of the well-meaning, narrow-minded old Bishop did but confirm Rashleigh in his repudiation of the Papacy, and after a while he received no other visits than those of his gaoler. How long he remained thus in this foul hole Rashleigh never knew. He only knew that, though he doubted at times of everything else in his own life—doubted even of his own identity—at no moment did he feel the least temptation to purchase, even at the price of a far lesser cowardice than abjuration of his faith, the right of going out again to live in such a world as he had now learned to know. "Even though it be not all a

ghastly nightmare," he said to himself, "even though these turn out to be the last days of Herbert Rashleigh's earthly life, I shall at least some day meet my wife and children (if wife and children I have) in heaven!"

The old man must have been as obdurate as he, for word came one day that they were both to die together on the morrow. Their gaolers dressed them—by a mockery which afterwards caused far more scandal in the diocese than the mere burning of two of God's creatures—in rough caricatures of the Franciscan habit. In consideration of their different degrees of heresy, the old man was privileged to be burned at a separate stake and to march thither in front of the younger heretic. And here Rashleigh saw the effect of those abominable crimes with which heretics in the Middle Ages, like Christians among the Romans, were currently accused, crimes which may indeed have had some slight foundation in those days when conscientious dissenters were treated like wild beasts, and when other wild beasts in human shape, making a common cause of outlawry, would sometimes come and consort with them. As the old man was led forth Rashleigh heard shouts of pity among the crowd: "Abjure, father, abjure; why wilt thou die? Canst thou not hold with the rest of us, or, at the very worst, are these things worth dying for? Believe in the Pope, father; believe in the Pope, and save thy white hairs!" The very gaolers had given the same advice in rough kindness as they led him out, and here and there a woman would even beg the old man's blessing as he passed. Rashleigh, on the other hand, found himself dragged

and hounded along like a wild beast, pelted with mud, deafened with yells of execration—that horrible bitterness of heartfelt hate which blisters like vitriol, even through the armour of the strongest convictions. At last he was bound to the stake more dead than alive. But the preparations were lengthy, and he had some time to gather his thoughts—at first in strange detachment from himself, then with a growing sense of horrible injustice. The place was a stretch of waste ground ; the white walls and slender towers of a city rose on the near horizon ; behind, a black thunder-cloud was slowly darkening the whole sky. The executioners cheered each other to the work with rough jests. “Yare, John ! Yare, Robert ! Lo, how the foul fiend cometh riding on the cloud to bear away his own ! Quick, lad, quick ! reach hither the smaller brushwood and the brimstone, and let us see whether all the devils of hell shall quench this fire !” Meanwhile the cloud came up fast and faster, spreading pitchy darkness over their heads, and the clamours of the crowd gradually died away into dull murmurs, as the birds cease singing under an eclipse of the sun.

Rashleigh looked round him : he saw a crowd of upturned faces staring grey out of the darkness : it reminded him strangely of his own congregation at Greenhill looking up at him in the twilight of some autumn evening as he gave out his text from the pulpit. And yet how different ! There, with how much more respect had men looked on him than he deserved ! and here, out of all these thousands, was there one single being that did not execrate him as a

soul blackened with the most abominable crimes, of whom earth would be well rid in a few minutes' time? It was this universal hate that so crushed his soul —this, and the feeling of the utter uselessness of all his sufferings. On all these long wanderings, had he managed to impart to one single creature—with, perhaps, one exception—a single grain of those precious truths which he *knew* he knew, yet which he could not make anybody understand? And now, who would be the better for his death? Latimer might indeed cry out “Play the man, Master Ridley! we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, as I trust shall never be put out.” Yet here, not a soul realised more clearly what Rashleigh was dying for than this poor old man who, even now, had bade them so bind him that his back might be turned to the filthy heretic! All these men would go home to their wives and families without the least suspicion of the real facts, thinking only that they had been helping to rid the earth of a monster. Moreover, as habitual cruelty blunts by degrees even the earlier feelings of compassion, so to-day's injustice would render the spectators all the more ready at other times to defend the faith by the destruction of similar monsters; until at last the revolt should have grown too strong, and the constant barbarities of repression should sicken even the most orthodox theologians, and then the sea of new thoughts should come pouring through the breach, and sweep the old barriers away for ever. He knew now, as he looked round at this surging sea of hateful faces, why the inquisitors were able to note

that "our modern heretics" face death not with the cheerful carelessness of the ancient martyrs, but with mere dogged and gloomy resolution. And, as the smallest things sometimes crowd upon us at the gravest moments, he thought now with bitter regret, not so much of the petty quarrels he had once waged with all his soul about incense, and processional crosses, and questions of fish or flesh, and liturgical formulas and ecclesiastical millinery—not so much of these, but even more of the contempt which he had been used to express for the good old Archdeacon's Newgate fringe and modest white tie. He suddenly wondered whether Duvet was by this time safe back at Summerleigh, blandly explaining to his flock that the Church never had persecuted, except in the imagination of ignorant or malicious Protestants! He tried to pray: but still these other petty thoughts crowded into his mind—the Nemesis, no doubt, of all the petty details with which he had occupied so many hours of his working life, before this night had come when he would be no longer able to work. His mind was dry: as dry as his parched mouth and throat: it struggled helplessly as in a nightmare. Suddenly, however, his eye caught a gaze of painful intensity fixed on him from the crowd. He looked more closely, and saw a slight figure of a woman holding a little boy by the hand; the pair were startlingly like his own wife and boy. Moreover, she too seemed to feel something of the same painful attraction, for she had edged up to the very ropes. Instinctively he held out his hands to her: she shrank back and caught at the boy:

but he, running forward, picked up a faggot and cast it, with a child's innocent-cruel laugh, straight into the accursed heretic's face. Rashleigh's head fell upon his breast ; and at the same moment the fire was set to his pile.

He had time to wonder whether the flames would be very painful, and to wish they would come soon. But the wood was green, and first came the smoke : pungent, stifling, gripping him by the throat. A violent fit of coughing tore his breast : the whole world reeled round him ; this, then, was the end, swifter and more merciful than he had dared to hope !

## CHAPTER XX

### OUT OF THE DEEP WATERS

Two men were supporting him now, or he would have fallen: all around was light again: and there, in front of him, stood the Archdeacon—sorely puzzled, but solid and straightforward in his modern English flesh—the dear old Archdeacon himself, with his dear old fringe of beard and his dear old starched tie. Rashleigh fell upon the rector's neck, and fairly hugged him with delight. “What is it, my boy?” asked the old man: but Rashleigh only answered with a sob, and his salt tears mingled with the water that dripped from his wet hair down the other's broad back. The rest of the company stood in astonished groups round him and Duvet, who lay back in a deck-chair with a ghastly face, muttering with white lips a prayer for whisky. They brought him a tumblerfull with a drop or two of water, which he emptied almost at a gulp. But he answered no questions, and all crowded now round Rashleigh, who was sketching his adventures in broken words. The first time the priest's name came into his story he suddenly interrupted himself, and looked round . . . “By the bye, where is poor Duvet?”

Where, indeed ! He had taken the first opportunity of gliding silently from the room : and his landlady, opening the door to him five minutes afterwards, took him for a ghost. To kind enquiries at the lodgings that night she answered that he was unwell in bed, and could see nobody. Next day he politely disclaimed any responsibility for whatever nonsense Rashleigh might have talked : he himself had simply gulped a mouthful of water the wrong way in the course of that foolish trick, and had nearly choked to death. "And I almost fear," added he in a meek voice, "that Findlay's water was not very clean : for I was violently sick all night, and am still very much shaken this morning. . . . You will not take anything ? Then I am sure you will excuse me : Sunday, as you know, is a very busy day for us poor priests."

It was noticed thenceforward that he shrank from society, and was apt to start or grow pale, like the risen Lazarus, at chance words or phrases which seemed to strike some secret chord in his memory. Especially remarkable was his loathing for the company of Sister Mary, who fawned on him more than ever, but on whom he would sometimes gaze with the speechless horror which a bird is said to feel at the insidious advances of a snake. In short, nobody was surprised, either when he left Summerleigh for a short rest and change of air, or again when the Rev. Patrick Murphy announced himself the lawfully appointed successor of the Rev. Terence Duvet. I have heard that a gentleman of his name and bodily appearance practises now in London as a stockbroker, and lives at

Bromley with a rich widow whom he married some years ago : but this Mr. Duvet the stockbroker disclaims all connection, past or present, with the Catholic priesthood.

As for Rashleigh, he is still at Greenhill ; for the present breadth of his theology wins him as little episcopal favour as its former height. I met him for the first time some years after the time of this story, at a village match, where his boy bowled me ignominiously at my first ball, and he himself broke one of the five clumsy fingers which I incautiously stretched out in the hope of catching him at mid-on. That was the end of my cricket in this wicked world, and the beginning of my friendship with a very hard-working country parson. After having seen the realities of medieval ritual, he would gladly have made a clean sweep of all the ceremonies to which he had once fondly clung as such ; but he considered the feelings of his parishioners, and only showed them little by little how loose he sat from these things which had once seemed to him worth the most desperate struggles. And later on, when this particular quarrel about Incense and Reservation had lost its savour, and those who really hankered after Rome had mostly gone over, and the "slump" in ritual had set in, he gradually settled into the typical Broad Churchman who uses just those few ornaments and ceremonies which are adopted as edifying by a sort of rough general consent among reasonable people. He has six children, all of a very robust pattern ; his village clubs are run on the broadest lines, and though he has fewer Nonconformists now in his parish,

he is on good terms with them all. He has never forgotten his feelings during those few moments when he seemed to stand at the very steps of the Judgment Seat; and the question now uppermost in his mind is never "Who follows the more Catholic ceremonies and the more Catholic form of words, John Watson or I . . . ?" but always "Which of us two will be better prepared to meet that strict sentence, 'Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me.'" Of course, there are many still who give hard names to so simple and so bare a religion, just as men found hard names for it even in the days of its Founder. But Rashleigh's fundamental loyalty to his own Church is too well-known now to need daily advertisement; and he gains rather than loses among the best of his acquaintances by never even attempting to ignore the truths that are held by other churches.

## EPILOGUE

STRANGELY as some of the foregoing pages may read to those who know the Middle Ages mainly from novels and books of edification, there is scarcely an incident which I have not taken from the most unimpeachable sources. The examination of Lord Halfwayhouse, for instance, is copied from a specimen interrogatory reproduced in two inquisitors' manuals: the old priest's discourse on false relics and saints, from a treatise on this subject by the learned contemporary of St. Anselm, Guibert Abbot of Nogent; the Summerleigh visitation, from those of Southwell Minster. Even the convert's letter in my first chapter is a mere abbreviation, with few alterations, from an auto-biographical narrative actually printed in the *Tablet*. My readers should by all means read the original (October 12th, 1901), which is more interesting and instructive than my brief summary can be. At the same time I have taken the novelist's usual small licences with regard to dates, altering that of Pope John XXII.'s death by a year or two to suit my dramatic purpose.

I subjoin here two specimens of the actual documents from which I have worked; not that I ignore the possibility of giving a very false impression on the whole, without misquoting the facts in detail: but on

this more important point I am ready to face any responsible criticism. My main points, as the reader will have seen, are as follows:—(1) that clerical morals in the Middle Ages were such as no civilised modern country could tolerate; (2) that even in reverence and care for their churches these men were far below the modern standard; (3) that the so-called Ages of Faith were in fact too often ages of doubt and despair for sensitive souls; (4) that, less than a century after St. Francis's death, spiritual Franciscans were tortured and burned by their "relaxed" brethren for their strict adherence to that rule to which all were alike pledged; and (5) that the injustices and cruelties of the medieval Inquisition were almost past modern belief. On any one of these points I will print, *at my own expense*, such criticisms as I receive from the first competent challenger within six months of this date, to the extent of twenty-four of these pages, or 6,000 words.

But indeed I do not seriously anticipate any acceptance to this challenge, as I have received none to my even plainer challenges in the past. Those who do not yet realise how guilty is the Romanist historian's literary conscience, and how willing he is to let even the plainest charges pass in silence, should read my articles in the *Independent Review* for June, 1905, the *Contemporary* for December, 1905, and April and July, 1906, and the pamphlet in which I have exposed Abbot Gasquet's extraordinary manipulations of evidence.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *Independent* article, "Romanism and Morality," may be obtained separately at 6d., and the pamphlet, "The Monastic Legend," at 1s., from Simpkin, Marshall & Co.

The few Romanists who know anything of medieval records, know quite well that the reality is worse than even the average candid modern Protestant cares to believe, until he sees full proof of it. They know that clerical immorality, clerical ignorance, the random proceedings of popes and prelates, the iniquities of the Inquisition, were all so bad that the best policy of the apologist is to shirk all public controversy on these points. For this reason it is necessary at times to remind the public of these undeniable facts, which are often so grievously misrepresented.

With the men who lived in the Middle Ages it is impossible for the honest student not to feel the greatest sympathy; they tried, like ourselves, to do their best, but the world in which they lived reduced them to despair. The true lesson which their history has for us is that of content with the age in which our own lot has been cast, and in which we shall do most good by looking onwards instead of backwards. We shall never make the best of our present world until we realise how false it is to hanker after the ideals of a dead past.

# I

## BRIEF SUMMARY OF A SINGLE VISITATION OF SOUTHWELL MINSTER, Oct. 2, 1475, FROM MR. A. F. LEACH'S EDITION FOR THE CAMDEN SOCIETY (pp. 20 ff.).

“STEPHEN CLERK, detected for shirking matins and the masses of his chauntry, frequenting taverns, and not coming to chapter: 6 Oct. pleads guilty. Amendment enjoined on pain of suspension.—William Norton habitually shirks prime and hours; a common talker in choir; a common ribald and scurrilous talker among the laity; reveals the secrets of the vicars' hall and the chapter in Henry Bury's house: 6 Oct. ordered to amend.—Ledenam, common frequenter of taverns, often drunk, shirks choir and chantry masses: 6 Oct. ordered to amend.—John Bull, since Xmas last suspiciously frequents Agnes Saynton, seen leaving her garden at 'first peal' for matins; shirks his chauntry masses; diffamed with Margery, wife of the apothecary: ordered to amend.—Rests not observed [by the clergy generally] in the psalms.—Knolles shirks matins and prime; sleeps at matins two or three times a week; suspiciously frequents house of Jane Cook; 9 Oct. ordered not to go to Jane Cook's house except with honest persons.—Robert Button

shirks matins and prime.—Chauntry chaplains shirk *Preciosa*.—Custans and Barthorp shirk choir: 9 Oct. Custans ordered to attend on pain of law.—Tykkyll shirks choir; does business on feast days; neglects his chauntry: 9 Oct. ordered to amend.—John Warsopp shirks prime and hours; ordered to amend.—John Gregory shirks choir; negligent as sacristan; does not sleep in the church [though bound to do so as guardian]; neglects the vestry and the plate there.—Richard Stedmere unlawfully plays at ball; 10 Oct. ordered to amend.—William Bekbank accused of administering noxious herbs to Catherine Bexwyk for unlawful purpose; 10 Oct. denies the charge; 11 Oct. canonically purges himself by 6 witnesses [*i.e.*, gets 6 clerical friends to swear belief in his innocence] . . . . The bye-laws of the Vicars Choral are not enforced.—The secrets of the chapter and the Vicars Choral are told in Isabella Bury's house, by Norton, Mery, or Ledenam.—The chauntry priests do not attend to the precentor in chaunting.—Stephen does not get his stipend paid. . . . Dyson's stipend in arrear.—There is only one gradale [a service-book] on the north, and 2 on the south side of the choir.—Rooper's stipend in arrear. . . . Bull assaulted Gregory, and Gregory lay in wait to assault him in the church, and neither had been punished: 10 Oct. Gregory ordered to pay 20s. fine unless the vicars let him off.—Norton and Gregory struck each other in the chapterhouse.—Gregory struck Warsopp on the head in the Vicar's Hall, and drew blood; and Norton in Isabella Bury's house, and would have killed him if she had not

prevented the deed.—The churchyard is not properly kept, but defiled by animals. . . . Knolles is an adulterer with the wife of John Cook.—Worseley grants dispensation to Lawrence Brukshaw from prime to refresh himself with food and drink before singing Our Lady's Mass.—20 Oct. Richard Bruch complains of slander by Knolles and Bekbank, chaplains, that he had caused them to be falsely indicted at Southwell Sessions for felony; asks that they should be excommunicated and pay costs. . . . Knolles found guilty of slander, suspended from office and benefice, and warned not to wear his habit till he has agreed with R. Bruch and paid damages and costs.” As Mr. Leach comments upon this and similar Southwell Visitations recorded between 1469 and 1542: “Such then was the state of the church and clergy of Southwell in the century preceding the Reformation. We know from such books as Mr. Fowler's edition of the Ripon Chapter Acts, and Mr. Reynolds's privately printed Wells records, that things were no worse at Southwell than elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> . . . We can only conclude that neglect of duty and sexual immorality were so common that they were never punished, except when some public scandal was created by them.” For instance, John Bull, the sinner of 1475, was at these later visitations accused of similar and worse immoralities, and had engaged in

<sup>1</sup> To this list Mr. Leach might have added the Beverley Chapter Acts (edited afterwards by himself for the Surtees Society), and the Registers of Bishop Grandisson of Exeter and Archbishop Eudes Rigaud of Rouen.

a fight in the churchyard in which blood had been shed: yet the worst punishment ever inflicted on him was a *three days'* suspension! He was promoted in regular seniority to a higher canonry, and died in office in 1537.

## II

BRIEF EXTRACTS FROM THE "TREATISE  
ON RELICS" OF ABBOT GUIBERT DE  
NOGENT (MIGNE, PAT. LAT., VOL. 156, COLS.  
614, 615, 625, 622, 624).

"I CALL God to witness, that I have read—and read again in utter loathing to them that were with me—in the Life of Samson, a saint of great reputation in France and Brittany, concerning a certain Abbot whom that book names St. Pyro. When, however, I sought into the latter end of this man whom I held for a saint, I found his special mark of sanctity to be this: viz., that he fell into a well while drunken with wine, and thus died. . . . If the Prophet saith 'woe unto them that call good evil, and evil good,' what then can be more perverse than to thrust under the holy altar [the relics of] such men as were perchance worthy themselves to be thrust forth from the very precincts of the church? . . . Odo Bishop of Bayeux eagerly desired the body of St. Exuperius, his predecessor, who was honoured with special worship in the town of Corbeil. He paid, therefore, the sum of one hundred pounds to the sacristan of the church which possessed these relics, that he might take them for himself.

But the sacristan cunningly dug up the bones of a peasant named Exuperius and brought them to the Bishop. The Bishop, not content with his mere assertion, exacted from him an oath that these bones which he brought were those of Saint Exuperius. 'I swear,' replied the man, 'that these are the bones of Exuperius: as to his sanctity I cannot swear, since many earn the title of saints who are far indeed from holiness.' Thus the thief assuaged the Bishop's suspicions and set his mind at rest. . . . See now what disgrace this Bishop's bargain brought upon religion, when the bones of this profane peasant Exuperius were thrust into God's holy altar, which perchance will never more be purged of them. I can recall so many like deeds in all parts that I lack time and strength to tell them here: for fraudulent bargains are made, not so much in whole bodies as in limbs or portions of limbs, common bones being sold as relics of the saints. . . . What shall I say of those saints whom the common folk manufacture daily in their towns and villages, in rivalry with such great and acknowledged saints as Martin and Remigius? For, seeing that others have famous patrons [in heaven,] they also have desired to get themselves such as they could, and have made saints of their own. . . . Moreover there are things written of some saints which are far worse than old wives' tales, and not fit even for a swineherd's ears. Indeed, many men attribute the highest antiquity to their own saints, and beg authors in these latter days of ours to write their lives; but, seeing that I may be deceived even in things done under mine own eyes,

how shall I tell a true tale of things which no man ever saw? If I quote merely from hearsay (as men have begged me to write, and even preach publicly in praise of their unknown saints), then should I deserve as richly to be pilloried for speaking at their bidding, as they for putting such things into my mouth."

These two extracts are of course only given as a sample of the multitudes of medieval documents upon which I might draw to prove the implications conveyed in this book.





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